

**UCLA**

**UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations**

**Title**

Stories of Familial Support in Shaping the Educational Trajectories of Latina/x College Students

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/67m2z2c4>

**Author**

Zavala, Christina

**Publication Date**

2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Stories of Familial Support in Shaping  
the Educational Trajectories of Latina/x College Students

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Education

by

Christina Zavala

2020

© Copyright by

Christina Elizabeth Zavala

2020

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### Stories of Familial Support in Shaping the Educational Trajectories of Latina/x College Students

by

Christina Elizabeth Zavala

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Chair

The purpose of this study was to uncover the role of family in shaping the educational aspirations and trajectories of Latina/x college students. This study focused on interviews with 10 Latina/x first-generation students and 8 of their family members. Several theories helped to guide the framing and analysis of findings including LatCrit in Education, community cultural wealth, and Chicana/Latina feminism. Findings revealed that family members (i.e., parents, siblings, aunts/uncles, cousins, and grandparents) played an instrumental role in passing along positive messages about education and college. For parents in particular, these messages were often a direct reflection of the messages they themselves received as children (e.g., the importance of formal education and the morals/values they learned in the home). Parents held high aspirations for students to be someone in life and shared their own education and migration stories to motivate children to pursue their education. Furthermore, participant narratives revealed a

number of ways that family members and students simultaneously supported one another throughout students' educational journeys. For family members, this support often took the shape of providing transportation, emotional support, encouragement/moral support, financial, spiritual/religious support, and the act of "showing up." In the same vein, students supported family members by passing along the navigational and social capital they had acquired from being the first in their family to traverse the U.S. higher education system. Additionally, they provided family members with emotional support, encouragement/moral support, job related assistance, translation support, taking care of bills/paperwork, and looking after their parents' health. Findings also nuanced research on Latino families by revealing the tensions, challenges, and contradictions that were simultaneously faced by students. Such examples included misunderstandings about mental health, tense relationships, expectations to fulfill household chores, and feelings of disconnection from parents about what it took to get into college and what college was like. Overall, these findings offer a number of implications related to research, theory, and practice. In particular, there are a number of tangible ways that K-12 educators and higher education professionals can outreach to family members as findings revealed just how important students' families were to their academic success.

The dissertation of Christina Elizabeth Zavala is approved.

Jessica Christine Harris

Judy Marquez Kiyama

Ananda Maria Marin

Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my mom, Araceli, who has always believed in me and supported all of my educational pursuits even when it meant being away from home.

## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY .....	5
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	5
OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS.....	6
<b>CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS.....	8
LatCrit in Education.....	9
Community Cultural Wealth.....	13
Chicana/Latina Feminism .....	15
Summary of Theoretical Frameworks .....	17
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON LATINO FAMILIES .....	18
Familismo .....	19
Marianismo .....	21
ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL: FAMILIAL ENCOURAGEMENT FOR PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION....	23
Tensions, Challenges, and Contradictions.....	24
COLLEGE-APPLICATION PROCESS.....	25
Geographical Considerations .....	26
The Role of Gender.....	26
College Generational Status.....	29
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT.....	29
General Overview .....	30
Latinx Specific Studies .....	33
SUMMARY OF LITERATURE AND STUDY CONTRIBUTIONS.....	35
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>38</b>
PILOT STUDY .....	38
Objectives of the Pilot Study .....	38
Procedure for Pilot Study.....	39
Summary of Pilot Study Findings.....	40
Takeaways.....	42
QUALITATIVE APPROACH .....	44
ONTOLOGICAL ORIENTATION .....	44
CHICANA FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY .....	45
NARRATIVE INQUIRY .....	46
RESEARCH DESIGN .....	47
Research Site.....	47
Sampling and Participant Recruitment .....	48
Data Collection .....	48
DATA ANALYSIS .....	50
Familiarizing Yourself with the Data .....	51
Generating Initial Codes .....	51
Searching for Themes .....	52



Reviewing Themes.....	52
Defining and Naming Themes .....	52
Producing the Report .....	53
ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	53
POSITIONALITY .....	53
LIMITATIONS.....	55
<b>CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES.....</b>	<b>56</b>
DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS .....	56
Elena .....	58
Señora Rodriguez, Elena’s mother .....	59
Anahi.....	60
Señora Montellano, Anahi’s mother .....	62
Karen.....	62
Señora Garcia, Karen’s mother.....	63
Diana .....	64
Señora Fernandez, Diana’s mother .....	65
Reyna .....	66
Señor Hernandez, Reyna’s father .....	68
Cynthia.....	69
Sara, Cynthia’s older sister .....	70
Nayeli.....	71
Victoria, Nayeli’s older sister .....	72
Rosa.....	72
Esmeralda, Rosa’s older sister .....	74
Theresa.....	74
Lorena .....	75
<b>CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>77</b>
THE TRANSMISSION OF EDUCATION ACROSS GENERATIONS .....	77
Education and Educación: Parents’ Education Histories.....	77
Parental Messages about Education Transmitted to Students.....	80
Parental Messages about College Transmitted to Students .....	89
Familial Messages about Education and College Transmitted to Students .....	99
K-12 SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT .....	104
Parent-Student Relationship.....	104
Familial-Student Relationship .....	120
COLLEGE SEARCH AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS .....	126
Community College.....	126
Transferring from Community College to a Four-Year University.....	130
Four-year University.....	136
COLLEGE SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT.....	159
Community College .....	159
Four-Year University.....	166
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>220</b>
DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	220

RQ 1: Familial Messages about Education and College.....	220
RQ 2: Role of Family in Students’ Educational Journeys .....	223
IMPLICATIONS .....	233
Implications for Research .....	233
Implications for Theory .....	234
Implications for Practice .....	237
CONSEJOS [ADVICE] FROM STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND SIBLINGS.....	245
Advice to a Family Member .....	245
Advice to a Student.....	250
<b>APPENDIX A: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE.....</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: STUDENT PROTOCOL FIRST INTERVIEW.....</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: STUDENT PROTOCOL SECOND INTERVIEW .....</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL SPANISH .....</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: SIBLING INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>262</b>

## List of Figures and Tables

<b>Figure 1: Conceptual Framework</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Table 1: Student Demographics</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b>Table 2: Family Demographics</b> .....	<b>57</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Making it this far and completing my PhD would not have been possible without the love and support of so many individuals. First, I have to thank my family who has always been a constant support system in my life. Mom, you've always encouraged my passion for learning. Raising us as a single mother, you modeled such a tremendous work ethic and what it meant to care for the people around you. You've always been there to give a listening ear and have always believed in me even when I haven't always believed in myself. We've come a long way from you driving me all the way to Austin from Illinois to start my higher education journey at UT. Thank you for always being my biggest cheerleader and for always supporting my dreams. You are my first best friend, and I'm incredibly to call you my mom. Pop—you have now been around to see me graduate with my bachelor's, master's, and PhD. Thank you for always being there to pick me up from the airport and for never complaining when you had to drive me back at 4:00am. Thank you for always reminding me to ask for help when I need it—it's an important lesson that I'm still working on. To my twisted sisters, Monica and Magaly/Maggie, y'all have been through it all with me. Our group chat has always provided constant laughter and a way for us to stay connected even with me being far away. Thank you both for all of the love you have shown me. I've only ever hoped to be a positive role model for y'all and I hope that I've been able to accomplish this. Maggie/Mags (and the rest of your 50 nicknames)—you've been my partner in crime ever since I can remember. Thank you for always having my back and willing to go on any adventure with me. So proud of you for also graduating this year with your bachelor's from UTSA.

To my advisor, Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, thank you for taking me on as your student and for all the support you have shown me. We've shared many moments over the years that I hold near

and dear to my heart. You've shown me nothing but love and have also been a cheerleader throughout the job market and dissertation process. Your genuine care for others (not just your students) has been everything for students like me. Thank you for believing in me and for encouraging me to always push forward. Siempre Pa'lante. A special thanks to my other committee members: Jessica Harris, Ananda Marin, and Judy Marquez Kiyama. Jessica, I'm so appreciative of all the times I came to you in a panic about my data collection data process and you were there to walk me through it. A very big thank you for all of the letters of recommendation you sent out during this whirlwind of a job market. I know it was a lot! Ananda, you are brilliant, and it has been such an honor to learn from you. I will forever look back on our 222C class with fondness. I remember asking so many questions and feeling so frustrated about the coding process. This class provided the foundation for me to be able to pull off this dissertation. I will miss seeing you in Moore Hall and our hallway chats. Judy, it has been a complete honor to have you on my committee as a leading scholar and content expert in the area of familial support and engagement. When I brainstormed people for my dream committee, I immediately thought of you. I still can't believe you said yes! Thank you for your positivity and encouragement every step of the way. I remember signing up to meet with you during faculty office hours at the 2015 NASPA conference and talking through options for pursuing this doctoral degree. Here I am with a PhD.

I must also recognize other GSE&IS faculty and staff who have contributed to my experience at UCLA. Linda Sax: Thank you for all of the opportunities (i.e., funding, research, and teaching) you have given me over the years. You served as one of my letter writers this year and, for that, I'm so appreciative. I'll miss our hallway chats! Sylvia Hurtado: Thank you for welcoming me into your RAC and NIH team. You provided me with some helpful feedback that

I incorporated into this dissertation and have looked out for me even though I wasn't your advisee. Your guidance and support are much appreciated. To the amazing staff in GSE&IS: Amy Gershon and Kim Mattheussens thank you for all that you do to make HEOC and GSE&IS run smoothly! Any time I had an issue that needed resolving, y'all both stepped in and worked your magic. A big thank you to UCLA and the Graduate Division for providing me with fellowships (Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship and the Dissertation Year Fellowship) that supported this dissertation.

Surviving these past five years would not have been possible without my amazing cohort. First, I must recognize the members of the Weyburn Fitness Club (WFC): Devon Graves, Channel McLewis, Damani White-Lewis, and Lavinia 'Ulu'uave. Devon, you are one of the funniest and most outrageous people I know. I can't tell you how many times you've made me cry of laughter. Thank you for the constant support and tough love when I needed to kick it into high gear. Your phone calls and check in texts through all of this have really meant a lot. I know there have been numerous times that I've called you up and asked for your advice and guidance about the job market and filing process so thank you. Channel—You are my twin! So many late nights spent with you in Weyburn and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor lab during the first few years of the program. You were one of the first friends I made, and I knew you would be family when I found out you were also #GMS. You've been there throughout this whole journey and I'm beyond blessed to know you. From conferencing, dinners, shopping trips, and road trips—we've shared so many memorable experiences. We even managed to finish up our dissertations at the same time and keep each other company on late night demon hours work sessions with Devon, Damani, and Lavi. I'm looking forward to publishing in the future with you. Damani, I'm so glad we got to share an office space together. I'll never forget all of the moments of hyping you up as

you walked in with your LA outfits. Thank you for always being there to listen, especially during the moments of discovering my true authentic self. Lavi, you are one of the best! You have been one of my confidantes over the years and another member of the #GMS squad. We've shared so many special memories over the years and I know there will be more ahead. I'll always remember all of the late nights driving back from dropping off Channel and belting out "Un-break my heart" and "Can't take my eyes off of you." Thank you for always checking up on me these past few months and making sure that I was doing okay. You're up next friend! WFC—thank you for all of the special moments we've shared. We'll always have all of the conferences we've attended together and #HTGAWM nights. To the other amazing members of my cohort: Travis Tilman, Patrick Bourke, "Sweet T" Jenny Lee, Connie "Con Con" Chang, Kari George, Krystle Cobian, and Daniel Harris, I can't imagine going through this program without y'all. As a cohort, we were always there to celebrate all of the milestones from DAP, quals, dissertation proposals, and finally dissertation defenses. Connie and Kari—the support and accountability y'all provided during my last week of writing was super appreciated. Thank you, friends. A huge congrats to you both for also finishing up the dissertation this year. We did it! Krystle—amiga, you have been one of my day ones since starting at UCLA. Your big heart and thoughtfulness are unparalleled. You have truly been there for me in more ways than you can imagine and, for that, I'm beyond grateful. Thank you for all of the heart to hearts, your sage wisdom, extreme bouts of laughter, and for bringing me into your family. You are a brilliant scholar—don't ever forget it.

To additional fellow HEOCers—Justin Gutzwa, Nadeeka Karunaratne, Daisy Ramirez, Gabe Altamira, Diana Lopez, Ana Romero, Katherine Cho, Sabrina Miller, Katilin Splett Newhouse, Audrey Devost, Annie Wofford, Ariana Dimagiba, Ana Karen Gomez, Patricia Martin, and Xochilth Lopez-Salgado, I will always remember all of the office chats in 3019 and

conversations in the hallways and grad lounge. Y'all are some of the best of the best and killing the scholar game. Shoutout to the #TeamCecilia advisees who I've been lucky enough to know and work with, Diana Lopez, Natacha Cesar-Davis, Austin Lyke, Sidronio Jacobo, Des McLennan, Fernando Garcia, Daisy Ramirez, and Devon Graves. Congrats on also finishing this year Dra. Cesar-Davis and thank you for checking in on my progress and well-being. Sid/ "Summer Sid" and Des, I look forward to moving our paper forward and publishing soon! Diana, your positivity, optimism, and overall good nature are a breath of fresh air. Fernando, thank you for your friendship and all of the good times we've shared. I very much looking forward to seeing all that you'll continue to accomplish. Daisy and Paul, I'm going to miss our annual summer beach days and camping trips. Thank you both for your friendship and I look forward to seeing y'all in Austin! Justin—my fellow doubles partner and the glue that holds our Destiny's Stepchildren duo together, thank you for these years of friendship. You've taught me how to unapologetically be myself and to enjoy every moment of this life. Your music playlists have gotten me through many writing days, and I know for a fact that my music game is stronger because of you. You're always willing to go above and beyond for your friends and I love you for that. Nadeeka—you are one of the sweetest, most caring people I've ever had the privilege of knowing. Your big heart and vibrant personality are two of your best qualities. Thank you for reminding me that my research matters. Gabe—you go hard for the people you love like no other person I've met before. I swear everyone needs someone like you to hype them up because your compliments, belief in people, and support are endless. Remember that you are worthy of love and all that is good in this world. Thank you for sending me all those TikTok videos and tweets—they provided so much humor in the midst of all the nonstop working. I'll forever remember the memories we made in Portland. Katherine (Mentee), we have shared many



memories over the past four years. I will always remember your love for Duke basketball and all of the disagreements you and Bryant would have lol. Congratulations on also finishing up your PhD this year and for your faculty appointment! Thank you for your fierce support and for always being there to listen. Abbie Bates/Bates Motel: I remember meeting you for the first time when we used to work across the hall from one another in Math and Sciences. Not too long after at my first academic conference, you took it upon yourself to help me network with others and introduced me to faculty and students. I've always been in awe of your ability to walk up to a complete stranger and make a new friend. I should also point out that this ability of yours has landed us in some very hilarious and memorable situations. Because of you, I have experienced the wonders of mezcal, sotol, and Three Weavers. I admire the authenticity, confidence, and boldness with which you live your life. You've shown me nothing but love and support and have even brought me into your family. I've seen the change from who I was when I first entered the program and who I am now and part of that is because of you. You've pushed me outside of my comfort zone on numerous occasions and have encouraged me to be me. You're constantly reminding me during moments of self-doubt that I am smart and capable of doing anything. I love you.

To my SSCE friends—Bryant Partida, Christine Vega, Sharim Hannegan-Martinez, Mary Senyonga, and Michael Moses. The support and encouragement I have received from y'all has been so instrumental. I'll forever remember all of our RACs with Danny and the classes we have shared with one another. Mary and Bryant—y'all are up next to complete this PhD. You can do it. Christine—I can't tell you how many times you've been there to remind me to lean on my community and ask for help. Your friendship and guidance have been much appreciated. I'm so happy that you get to come back home and be among friends and family. Sharim—thank you for

inviting me to your morning Zoom sessions as you were also finishing up your dissertation. It was an honor to witness your dissertation defense doctora! Congrats again on finishing and thank you for all of the memories we've shared over the years. A very special shoutout to Moses for keeping me accountable this past year with our writing days at USC Village. You were there for me this past year from beginning to end and I can't tell you how grateful I am. You were there to see me through applying for jobs, gave me feedback on my application materials, sent me your own job materials, forwarded potential jobs to apply to, and the list continues. Thank you for exemplifying what it means to be in community with others during a process that can sometimes be filled with competition. I really don't know what I would've done without you.

To my HDP friends, Alejandra Martin, Marlen Quintero Pérez, Sarah Jo Torgrimson, and Briana Rodriguez, I've shared so many wonderful memories with you all. Ale and Marlen, I'll always remember all of times we worked together in the grad lounge. Y'all have always been so encouraging and I'm very grateful to know y'all. I'm excited to see two more Latinas finish their PhDs! Sarah Jo, my Capricorn and movie/TV buddy, you are a model for what it means to work hard. I always looked forward to our chats about Grey's and the moments we came together to watch Killing Eve and Jane the Virgin. I always got a kick every time we exchanged thoughts about shows, life, and work because they were usually one in the same. I attribute this to both being Capricorns. Briana—I remember seeing you in the grad lounge and thinking that you seemed cool and I wanted to be your friend. I'm so glad we eventually got to talking because my life is better with you in it. We've always shared a special connection in that you always sense when I'm overwhelmed and need someone to talk to. I've come to you so many times to talk through my frustrations and fears and you've always been there to listen to me and remind me to reframe my thinking. You were especially there for me throughout the job market reminding me

to listen to my gut, think through what was most important to me, and that I knew more than I gave myself credit for. I've learned so much from you.

To my greater LA friends: Nora Franco, Aisha Conner-Gaten, and Eva Rios-Alvarado. Thank you for welcoming me to your group this past year and for all of the fun moments we've shared. It's been fun getting to know y'all and experiencing LA together. To Theresa Hernandez—The support and encouragement I've received from you has meant the world to me. You were one of the main reasons I was able to cope with this pandemic and get through the last difficult stages of completing the dissertation. We are truly two peas in a pod! Thank you for the puppy therapy and letting me hang out with Cali. These last few months have been filled with so much doubt and stress and you've been there through it all to remind me that I can do this, be gentle with myself, and to also encourage me to take breaks. These reminders, along with the ones to drink more water and eat, were important to my well-being. Thank you for all those late-night Zoom sessions, dance breaks, beach days, trips to the park, walks, and movie/TV show breaks. Silvia Rodriguez Vega—You're always checking in to see how I'm doing and you're one of my favorite people to talk about shows/movies with! Thank you for welcoming me into your home and for supporting me this past year. Kabita Parajuli—even though you live in Portland, I'm including you here because we first met in LA. Where to begin? I've had the pleasure of knowing you for the past year and, in this time, you've become a very special person in my life. I still can't believe you showed up to support me as I presented my work at a conference in Portland. Knowing that you were also up working late at night made me feel less alone as I was finishing up this dissertation. Our phone calls and texts were something that I always looked forward to as we caught up about life and talked about shows. I especially enjoyed the pics of Mala cutie! You were there to listen to me talk about my research, progress on my dissertation,

and job search process. Your words of encouragement and check-ins meant a lot to me and motivated me to keep on going. I want to especially thank you for showing up for me by sending me food during my last week of writing because you knew how stressed and busy I was to eat or make food. You are truly an amazing human! I admire your passion and hard work to make this world a better place. You are one of a kind and I look forward to continuing to see you do great things.

A big thank you to my Texas State community: Paige Haber-Curran, Shannon Dean-Scott, and Stan Carpenter, for encouraging me to apply to PhD programs and to not be afraid to step out of my comfort zone and choose a program that was out of state. Thank you for that advice because I can't imagine having gone elsewhere. Paige and Shannon thank you for your friendship over the years and for being a text or phone call away as I navigated my program and the job market. I always looked forward to our catch up and work sessions whenever I was back in Texas. To my SAHE cohort, thank y'all for the support that I've continued to receive over the years. The Tripod: KLB and BPA, thank you for your friendship over these past seven years. Y'all have been an important support system since grad school and being at UCLA. Even though we all live in different states, we've continued to be part of each other's lives and celebrate our personal and professional accomplishments. BPA, we've continued to meet up at conferences, trips to LA, and anytime we're back home in Texas. You've been there from the beginning of my grad school journey and there's no way I'm letting you go. You're stuck with me until the end Hobbit. I look forward to the next time the three of us are all reunited. I can't be sure what I would have done without y'all. I love you both.

To the Texas forever...ish group: BPA, Kayla, and Diana, thank you for keeping me sane over the years, especially during this last year of finishing up the PhD. Our Zoom dates got me

through the exhaustion and frustration of writing for my life. Our time together, both virtually and during our in-person reunions in Texas, were always filled with laughter and the best of times. I seriously cried from laughter every time we chatted. Y'all were there for me through the ups and downs of the job search and these final chapters of the dissertation. Diana, I'll be looking forward to hanging out with you more often as opposed to twice a year whenever I would come home. We'll both be living in the same city and I can't express just how much I'm looking forward to spending more time with you (and Emi!). BPA, seven years of friendship...let's keep it up. Kayla/"Cupcake," my first doubles partner in grad school, I always look forward to your stories because they are the most hilarious and outrageous. I'll never forget about the hawk chronicles. One of these days we're going to watch the U.S. Open in person. BPA and Kayla, please move back to Texas.

To my CKI friends Cortney, Mayank, Jackie, and Ashley, thank you for all of these years of friendship. No matter where I'm at, I know y'all are cheering me on. I can always count on your support and it's always the case that we just pick up from where we last left off. Looking forward to spending more time with y'all now that I'll be closer. May our futures include days of sitting on the front porch and drinking sweet tea.

To my other Texas friends: Ashley Jones, Catherine Flores, and Sarah Rodriguez, thank you for the love and encouragement you showed me from afar. Ashley and Catherine—I look forward to hanging out more with y'all now that I'll be back in Texas. Ashley, you've been there since the start of my PhD journey and have been nothing but encouraging and supportive every step of the way. We even got to work together on research and have presented together at conferences. Catherine, thank you for all of the phone call and text check-ins about the job market and PhD. You were so positive and encouraging and reminded me that I could do this.

Thank you again for the cookies you mailed to me! Sarah, I still remember meeting up in San Marcos to write with you while you were finishing up the dissertation. You are part of my #GMS family and have seen me through this PhD journey. Thank you for your support and encouragement throughout this last stage of writing and in offering guidance about the job market. Thank you for always thinking of me.

A big thank you to my vast support system. I have felt so much love, support, and encouragement throughout this entire PhD journey. I love you all.

## VITA

### Education, Experience, and Fellowships

---

- 2013 Bachelor of Arts, Psychology and Spanish  
University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- 2015 Master of Education, Student Affairs in Higher Education  
Texas State University, San Marcos, TX
- 2015-2019 Research Analyst  
University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
- 2016-2017 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship  
University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
- 2018-2019 Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship, Graduate Division  
University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
- 2019 Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship Honorable Mention
- 2019-2020 Dissertation Year Fellowship, Graduate Division  
University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

### Select Publications and Presentations

---

- Sax, L.J., Blaney, J. M., **Zavala, C.**, & Newhouse, K. N. S. (2020). Who takes intro computing? Examining the degree plans of introductory computing students in light of booming enrollments. In *Research on Equity and Sustained Participation in Engineering, Computing, and Technology (RESPECT)*. Portland, OR: IEEE.
- Jones, A., Miller, R., Burmicky, J., **Zavala, C.**, & Tanner, C. (2020). Determining your why: Is earning a doctorate degree the next step? Panel presentation at the Annual Meeting of NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, Austin, TX. (Conference canceled)
- Zavala, C.**, Gutzwa, J., Rios-Aguilar, C., Neri, R. (2020). Centering the voices of LGBTQ+ Students of Color in Community College. Paper presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, AERA, San Francisco, CA. (Conference canceled)
- Zavala, C.** (2019). The strength of family ties: Examining the family-student relationship for Latina college students. Paper presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, ASHE, Portland, OR.
- Zavala, C.** (2019). The pursuit of higher education: Understanding the role of family in

shaping the educational aspirations of Latina/x college students. Presentation at the UCLA Chicano/Latino Alumni Association Summit, Los Angeles, CA.

**Zavala, C., & Jones, A. (2019).** Interfaith engagement and global citizenship of LGBTQ+ undergraduate students. Paper presentation at the Annual Meeting of NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, Los Angeles, CA.

Romero, A., Chang, C., Karunaratne, N., & **Zavala, C. (2019).** Women of Color in the pipeline: Graduate student, practitioner, and beyond. Panel presentation at the NASPA Undergraduate Student Conference, Los Angeles, CA.

Rios-Aguilar, C., McLennan, D., Jacobo, S., & **Zavala, C., (2018).** Guided pathways, fewer choices, and better outcomes? Exploring the relevance and meaning of career aspirations among students of color. Paper presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, ASHE, Tampa, FL.

**Zavala, C. (2018).** By Extension: The familial support and engagement of Latina college students. Paper presentation at the Annual Meeting of the National Women's Studies Association, NWSA, Atlanta, GA.

Sax, L., Blaney, J. M., Lehman, K. J., Rodriguez, S., George, K., & **Zavala, C. (2018).** Sense of belonging in computing: The role of introductory courses for women and underrepresented minority students. *Social Sciences*, 7(122), 1-23.

Sax, L., Lehman, K. J., & **Zavala, C. (2017).** Examining the enrollment growth: Non-CS majors in CS1 courses. In *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM SIGSCE Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education* (pp. 513-518). New York, NY, USA: ACM.

**Zavala, C. (2017).** *Growing up Latina: The role of family in education.* Paper presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, AERA, San Antonio, TX.

**Zavala, C. (2017).** Understanding the impact of campus racial climate on students' sense of belonging. Paper presentation at the Annual Meeting of NASPA: Student Affairs Administrator in Higher Education, San Antonio, TX.



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As of 2015, the total Hispanic<sup>1</sup> population living in the U.S. was estimated to be 56.5 million in 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2017). In states like California, where approximately 15 million Latinos<sup>2</sup> reside (Pew Research Center, 2014), public schools have seen an increase in the number of Latino students (Zambrana & Hurtado, 2015). While this increase at the K-12 level is reflective of the growth of the Latino population at the national level, Latino students remain disproportionately represented in higher education (Gildersleeve, Cruz, Madriz, & Melendez-Flores, 2015). A research report released by the Los Angeles Education Research Institute (2017), showed that Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander LAUSD graduates in 2014 had the lowest rates of enrollment (i.e., 24%, 24%, and 16% respectively) in a four-year college compared to their peers of other racial/ethnic groups<sup>3</sup>. A similar trend held true when looking at six-year graduation rates from a four-year university. For example, among 2008 LAUSD graduates, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander students had the lowest graduation rates (i.e., 13%, 11%, and 11% respectively) compared to their peers of other racial/ethnic groups. When examining the gender and racial/ethnic breakdown of these same students, Latina<sup>4</sup> women and Latino men were found to have the lowest graduation rates at 16% and 10% among their

---

<sup>1</sup> I use the term Hispanic to align with the source of data obtained from the Pew Research Center.

<sup>2</sup> The term Latino is used to refer to a man of Latin American descent living in the United States (McAllister, 2012). At times, it may also be used to refer to the community as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> The LAUSD sample included the following racial and ethnic groups: Pacific Islander, Native American, Latino, African American, Filipino American, White, and Asian American.

<sup>4</sup> The term Latina is used to refer to a woman of Latin American descent living in the United States (McAllister, 2012).

peers. These low graduation and enrollment rates can also be seen at the national level. In 2014, the overall college enrollment rate at degree granting institutions for Hispanic students between the ages of 18 and 24 was 35% (NCES, 2017). Disaggregating the group “Hispanic” revealed that students of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Central American descent had college enrollment rates lower than that of the overall Hispanic enrollment rate at 33% (NCES, 2017). As such, further examination of these particular groups of Latino students is warranted. With regard to degree attainment, only 15% of Hispanic individuals between the ages of 25-29 in 2014 held a bachelor’s degree compared to White (41%), Black (22%), and Asian (63%) individuals (Pew Research Center, 2016).

In recent years, researchers (e.g., Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009) have taken a particular focus on how Latino males are being pushed out of the educational system. Though Latinas are also experiencing lower rates of college enrollment and degree completion than similar gendered peers of other racial/ethnic groups, the fact that they outpace their Latino male peers in these outcomes has meant that much of recent research has focused exclusively on Latino males. As noted by Pérez Huber et al. (2015) “Latina and Latino students share a structural position, each group experiences the effects of inequities in different ways” (p. 7). Similarly, Watford, Rivas, Burciaga, and Solorzano (2006) argued “studies are needed to uncover the sexist structures and social expectations that create additional barriers for Latinas educational attainment (p. 113). Interestingly, Gándara (1982) found that differences in Chicanos<sup>5</sup> and Chicanas emerged with Chicanos more likely than Chicanas to “credit their own inner strength and abilities for their

---

<sup>5</sup> The terms Chicano and Chicana are political ways of identifying individuals of Mexican descent who live in the United States. This term is used in alignment with studies that choose to use this term.

educational successes” while Chicanas “most often attributed their accomplishments to the support of their families (p. 177). For some Latinas, these gender dynamics may impact how they navigate conversations about higher education with their families. I argue that expanding current research to focus on Latina/x students is important within the larger effort to increase college related outcomes (e.g., enrollment and graduation) for Latinx students. As such, my study focuses specifically on Latina/x college students with a sub-interest in how gender has shaped their educational experiences.

Research has consistently shown that Latino families hold high expectations and positive beliefs about their children’s education (Cavazos et al., 2010; Ceja, 2004; Gonzales, 2012; Valencia & Black, 2002; Yosso, 2006). By expanding the conversation to the family unit as opposed to narrowly focusing on parents, researchers have been able to capture the importance of extended networks within Latino communities. For example, scholars have noted the positive role family and community ties often play in the overall persistence of Latinas in the K-20 pipeline (Gonzales, 2012). As such, siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins have been found to offer important levels of encouragement and support (Carey, 2016; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2015). Studies have also found that oftentimes the educational decisions of Latinas are influenced by the family unit (Hurtado, Cervantez, & Eccleston, 2010; Molinary, 2007; Torres, 2003). Furthermore, scholars have found Latino families to be encouraging and supportive of their daughters’ pursuits to earn a college degree as a college education has often been equated with better job opportunities and less obstacles to endure (Delgado Bernal, 2001, 2002; Moje & Martinez, 2007; Molinary, 2007; Peralta, Caspary, & Boothe, 2013), the ability to escape poverty and oppression (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; Leyva, 2011), and a desire for their daughters to set good examples for younger siblings (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Fulgini, Rivera, &

Leininger, 2007). Though this research has been abundant, there continues to be research that blames Latino families for students' low college enrollment and completion rates. Furthermore, there are studies that would seem to suggest that maintaining relationships with family members throughout college is a detriment to students' academic performance (Sy & Romero, 2008). Furthermore, there continues to be research that negatively portrays Latinos through stereotypes and broad cultural claims while also failing to contextualize findings within broader systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, patriarchy). Counterstorytelling challenges majoritarian stories (e.g., Latino parents do not value education) about Latinos, however the fact remains that there are often many tensions, challenges, and contradictions that students face when navigating relationships with their family, something that many studies do not grapple with.

Although researchers have increasingly realized the positive role parents may play in contributing to students' college success, literature on parent-involvement is relatively nascent with much of the focus being on the quantity of communication and the specific modes for which this communication takes place (Kiyama and Harper, 2015). Current research in this area has recently been critiqued for its limited analysis of race and gender as identities that may impact the parent-student relationship in college (Kiyama & Harper, 2015; Sax & Wartman, 2010). This lack of critical work is evident through the narrow focus on parents, which fails to account for the relationships students may have with siblings, extended relatives, and other members of their community. Additionally, much of the research engaging concepts related to parental support, involvement, and engagement has continued to elevate White, middle class notions of how and to what extent parents should interact with their students (Donovan & McKelfresh, 2008; Perna & Kurban, 2013). This, coupled with culturally deficit perspectives about Latino families, has resulted in beliefs that having and maintaining relationships with one's family is detrimental to

Latinas' stress levels, academic performance, and college success (Sy & Romero, 2008). Claims such as these reify notions that there is only one appropriate completion timeline for students, ignoring the possibility that other timelines may better align with students' familial roles and responsibilities.

### **Significance of Study**

Though Latino students have large enrollments in the K-12 system, rates of enrollment and degree completion at four-year universities are lower than rates for other racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, it is imperative that researchers stop using cultural determinants as explanations for students' success or failure and instead "investigate multiple social, familial, and institutional factors that jointly, across the life course, contribute to academic success, higher education completion, and career success" (Zambrana & Hurtado, 2015, p. 16). This study answers this call by investigating the role of family in contributing to the academic success and higher education completion of Latina/x students. Additionally, this study offers important contributions to the literature by challenging deficit perspectives of Latino families and students, offering a more expanded view of family as opposed to parents, and providing much needed information on the transition that families experience in the college process. This study is among few studies in higher education to include both family members and students in the data collection process. Findings from this study have the potential to impact Latina students and their family members on a more personal level as well as reveal important takeaways for educators at the K-12 and higher education levels to better engage with Latino families.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of family in shaping the educational experiences and trajectories for Latina/x college students. For the purpose of this study, family is defined as parents, guardians, children, and extended family that live in the household or frequently visit, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins (Kiyama, 2010). Using a qualitative, narrative inquiry design, this study is informed by Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), community cultural wealth, and Chicana/Latina feminism. The following questions guide this study:

1. What messages do Latina/x college students receive from their family about education and pursuing a college degree? How have these messages shaped their educational trajectories?
2. What is the role of family within Latina/x students' educational trajectories?

### **Overview of Chapters**

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the significance and research questions guiding the study. Chapter 2 is organized into two main sections: theoretical frameworks and literature review. I explain in detail the frameworks of LatCrit, Chicana/Latina feminism, and community cultural wealth which guide this study. I then move on to the literature review to explore relevant research that highlights Latino families more broadly and then delve deeper into research about Latino families within higher education. In Chapter 3, I introduce my pilot study and how it informs my current study. I then detail my rationale for a qualitative approach and narrative inquiry and conclude with the methods used for data collection and my procedure for analyzing the data. Chapter 4 is an extension of Chapter 3 that provides participant profiles for the 10 first-generation Latina/x college students and 8 of their family members that were part of this study. Chapter 5 offers a detailed analysis of the findings and how they relate to

Lat Crit, Chicana/Latina feminism, and community cultural wealth. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary of the findings in relation to relevant literature, offers implications for research, theory, and practice, and concludes with an offering of advice from students and their family members.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

I begin this chapter by introducing the conceptual frameworks of LatCrit in Education, Chicana/Latina feminism, and community cultural wealth as the main theoretical perspectives that informed this study. Within each framework, I detail the origins and its key tenets/assumptions and highlight the most salient aspects to this study. These frameworks help to contextualize the broader oppressive structures (e.g., patriarchy and sexism) that dominate society and offer explanations for how to situate the literature in terms of this larger context. Next, I present relevant literature organized into three sections: (1) A Brief Overview of Research on Latino Families; (2) Aspirational Capital: Familial Encouragement for Pursuing Higher Education; and (3) Parental Involvement and Support. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the gaps in current research and how my study contributes to the current literature base.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

According to Solorzano and Yosso (2002), theoretical models used within social science research tend to support “majoritarian stories” (p. 30). In order to challenge these Eurocentric notions, one can incorporate critical raced-gendered epistemologies that recognize “students of color as holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 107). By doing so, it is possible to understand the ways people of color experience lives marked by various oppressions and the ways those oppressions intersect with one another, particularly for women of color (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado Bernal, 2002). As such, using a critical race-gendered epistemology allows one to challenge the ways that the cultures and experiences of students of color have historically been misrepresented or outright erased within the education system (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Additionally, it allows for a reconceptualization of “educational



research, epistemology, and pedagogy in order to better understand the knowledges produced in our communities” (Elenes, Gonzalez, Delgado Bernal, & Villenas, 2001, p. 600). Furthermore, it may reveal other patterns of success that have often been overlooked and undervalued within Latinx families. The section that follows provides an overview of Latino Critical Race Theory in Education, community cultural wealth, and Chicana/Latina feminism, three frameworks that are useful in providing a more nuanced analysis of the experiences of Latina/x students and the relationships with their families.

### **LatCrit in Education**

**Historical roots: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and LatCrit.** CRT developed in the 1970s with a strong contingency of legal scholars and other stakeholders who were dismayed by the lack of progress being made since the 1960s and who wanted to address issues of racism, race, and power head on (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT is made up of six guiding principles: 1) racism is ordinary, yet unacknowledged making it difficult to address; 2) interest convergence/material determinism; 3) race is a social construction; 4) minority groups have been differentially racialized throughout various historical moments; 5) intersectionality and anti-essentialism such that no one has a single, simple identity; and 6) communities of color offer a unique voice in recounting their expressions with oppression (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). As noted by Ledesma and Calderón (2015), “CRT’s commitment to intersectionality also recognizes that oppression and racism are not unidirectional, but rather that oppression and racism can be experienced within and across divergent intersectional planes, such as classism, ableism, and so on” (p. 207). Inherent in CRT is the use of counterstories “to challenge, displace, or mock...pernicious narratives and beliefs for communities of color” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 49). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) noted that when these stories are powerfully written they

have the ability to highlight evidence that has been neglected and remind others of our humanity. Similarly, CRT calls for the importance of these stories to contextualize the broader society and capture the true complexity of issues (Ladson-Billings, 2003). Using CRT allows one to ask, “Whose stories are privileged in academic discourse, mass media, and social policy contexts and whose stories are distorted and silenced?” (Yosso & Solorzano, 2005, p. 124). This emphasis on counterstorytelling is an instrumental part of my study and well-suited for my methods of narrative inquiry (see Chapter 3) which is naturally interested in people’s stories and shifting the “focus from White, middle-class culture to the cultures of communities of color” (Yosso & Solorzano, 2005, p. 128).

LatCrit theory draws on CRT to center the racialization that Latinos have experienced in the U.S. Latino scholars, particularly those in the legal field, have developed their own ways of knowing by using LatCrit to call attention to such issues as “immigration, language rights, bilingual schooling, internal colonialism, sanctuary for Latin American refugees, and census categories for Hispanics” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 91).

**Guiding themes.** Over the years, Latino scholars have drawn from the work of LatCrit legal scholars to conceptualize a LatCrit in education perspective that functions alongside CRT and allows one to delve deeper into issues that are relevant to the experiences of Latinos (Malagon, Pérez Huber, & Velez, 2009; Pérez Huber, 2009b; Villalpando, 2004). For example, Villalpando (2004) has used LatCrit to disrupt myths that Latino families do not value education by calling attention to an educational system that simultaneously was set up to disadvantage Latino students and other communities of color and that blames students for not being successful. Thus, LatCrit is a useful tool in providing a critical analysis of power, privilege, and oppression while seeking to unmask the root causes of inequity. Furthermore, this theory

provides the context for addressing the multiple identities of the Latino community and the intersectionality of oppressions such as racism, sexism, and classism (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). As a result, this nuanced perspective of the intersectional lives of Chicanas/Latinas (Delgado Bernal, 2002) allows one to uncover the ways that their experiences may be influenced by gender, SES, sexual orientation, immigration status, and English language proficiency (Villalpando, 2004). Although LatCrit is an offshoot or sub discipline of CRT, both theories similarly rely on the following five themes within the context of education (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Malagon et al., 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). The following paragraphs give further context of these themes and how I use them in my study.

***Intercentricity of race and racism.*** The first theme relies on the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination (e.g., gender, class, and citizenship). In fact, Collins (2000) and Crenshaw (1991) described this through their respective interpretations of the matrix of domination and intersectionality which posit that individuals face layered experiences of oppression that oftentimes intersect with race. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) further described intersectionality as “the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings” (p. 57). In Chapter 5, I detail how issues related to gender, class, and citizenships status came up for the Latina/x college students in my study.

***Challenge to dominant ideology.*** The second theme relies on a challenge to dominant ideology which critiques the traditional views within education that research should be objective and race neutral, both of which can lead to deficit perspectives of people of color (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Knowledge is also seen as something that can be constructed among researchers and participants (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This study seeks to take a critical and asset-based

approach in talking about Latino families and the relationships that young Latina/x students have with them. Furthermore, this study seeks to move beyond the dominant ideology found in institutions of higher education, which dictate the ways families should be involved in students' lives, to demonstrate how student-family relationships continue to be important in college, particularly for Latina/x college students. This perspective and the ways researchers have continued to define parental involvement, engagement, and support often exclude the ways entire families, not just parents, may demonstrate these actions and behaviors. As I detail in Chapter 5, siblings, cousins, tíos/tías [aunts/uncles], and grandparents played active roles in shaping the educational experiences of Latina/x students beginning at the K-12 level.

***Commitment to social justice.*** The third theme relies on a commitment to social justice and highlights the ways oppression is equally met by resistance from those who are subordinated. Within the literature base and through a Chicana/Latina feminist lens we know that Latina/x students may face multiple oppressions inside and outside their family and community; yet, through acts of resistance and education, young Latina/x individuals are often able to transform their lives and the lives of people around them. As I detail in Chapter 5, several students in the study challenged fathers and brothers to re-examine their beliefs, particularly around how to treat women.

***Experiential knowledge.*** The fourth theme relies on the centrality of experiential knowledge by recognizing the lived experiences of people of color and may operate closely to that of the second theme of challenging dominant ideology. Oftentimes, this experiential knowledge is passed down by family members through avenues such as storytelling (Villalpando, 2004). I see this passing on of knowledge as connected to Yosso's (2006) familial capital which also highlights how family histories and narratives are transmitted across family

and community. Because counterstories challenge deficit narratives about communities of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), I see an inherent tie to experiential knowledge. I detail my use of counterstories as a method for analysis and organization of my findings in Chapter 3. By engaging in interviews with Latina/x students and their family members, my study centers their voices and lived experiences as I lay out their narratives in Chapter 5.

*Transdisciplinary perspective.* The fifth and final theme recognizes a transdisciplinary perspective that inherently draws on other fields such as ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, and law (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). As I note throughout my overview of Chicana/Latina feminism in the next few sections and later highlight throughout the literature review, this study is informed by the work of scholars who look at race, class, and gender within fields such as sociology, Chicana/o studies, and education. As such, I position myself and this study to be in conversation with scholars doing similar work in these fields.

Though LatCrit in Education is certainly important in providing a context for understanding macro forms of oppression (e.g., patriarchy, racism, and sexism) experienced by individuals within the Latino community, it does not offer a way to make sense of the relationships and interactions that students may have with their family members. To fill this gap, I look to community cultural wealth and Chicana/Latina feminism.

### **Community Cultural Wealth**

Yosso and Solorzano (2005) argued that through a CRT lens, researchers are able to counter the deficit perspectives about people of color by recognizing the “cultural wealth already present in these communities” (p. 127). This accumulation of resources is oftentimes de-legitimized by traditional interpretations of what it means to have capital (Yosso, 2006).

Knowing that deficit perspectives about communities of color persist as a result of majoritarian storytelling, Yosso (2006) sought to challenge this narrative through the use of counterstorytelling to address the Chicana/o educational pipeline. This process of (re)framing the conversation and centering the experiences of communities of color, speaks to the tenets of challenging dominant ideology and centering experiential knowledge that is found in LatCrit in Education and CRT. Yosso (2006) argued that communities of color possess cultural wealth in the form of six different types of capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant. Aspirational capital honors the ways individuals imagine the possibilities (hopes and dreams) in their lives despite often not having the resources to always realize these goals (Yosso, 2006; Yosso & Solorzano, 2005). Linguistic capital refers to the skills (intellectual and social) that students of color have with regard to communication and language (Yosso, 2006; Yosso & Solorzano, 2005). Navigational capital critiques the ways people of color are forced to traverse institutions that were not made for them (Yosso, 2006; Yosso & Solorzano, 2005). This capital shares a unique relationship with social capital as it is often the case that individuals gain resources as they navigate an institution and pass along this knowledge to those in their social networks (Yosso & Solorzano, 2005). Thus, social capital involves “networks of people and community resources” (Yosso, 2006, p. 45). Additionally, the ability to successfully navigate institutions is often dependent on one’s identities and a reliance on social networks to help facilitate the process (Yosso, 2006). As Yosso (2006) noted, familial capital extends understandings of family to include “immediate family (living or long passed on) as well as aunts, uncles, grandparents and friends who we might consider part of our familia” (p. 79). By extending a broader understanding of family, Yosso (2006) offered a way of critiquing previous notions of family that are “racialized, classed, and heterosexualized” (Yosso & Solorzano, 2005,

p. 130). Additionally, (Yosso, 2006) argued that another component to familial capital acknowledges the “cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (p. 48). As noted by Villenas and Moreno (2001), familial capital must also involve the ways structures of oppression may also exist for women inside and outside the family unit and this is where Chicana/Latina feminism comes in. Finally, resistant capital “refers to those knowledges and skills cultivated through behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2006, p. 49). Because the community cultural wealth framework is informed by CRT, uses an asset-based perspective, and directly challenges deficit framed narratives, it offers an important analytical tool with which to further contextualize the experiences of Latina/x college students and their families. Extending beyond these six forms of capital, Pérez Huber (2009a) proposed spiritual capital as another form of capital that can be nourished through one’s family and community. Spiritual capital is defined “as a set of resources and skills rooted in a spiritual connection to a reality greater than oneself” (Pérez Huber, 2009a, p. 721).

### **Chicana/Latina Feminism**

Chicanas have remained largely invisible within U.S. history resulting in few theories and methods that are actually representative of Chicana feminism. (Flores, 2000). Throughout the 1970s, the work of feminist scholars opened the door to advance critical perspectives that brought gender into the conversation (Flores, 2000). The emergence of an early Chicana feminism was said to occur between 1969 and 1975, with the works of Chicana feminists such as Anzaldúa and Moraga emerging in the late 70s and early 80s (Bebout, 2011). This moment in time was marked by feminists of color (e.g., bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins) who challenged the ways their experiences were compared to White, middle class women (Segura & Pierce,

1993). For many women of color, the question became how to “[transform] structures of domination and subordination both inside and outside [themselves], and how these transformations can bring about new identities capable of supporting egalitarian change” (Sandoval, 2016, p. 321). Chicanas soon realized they could not completely relate to their nation because of the inherent sexism within the Chicano movement (Segura & Pierce, 1993) and demanded a feminism that would allow them to recognize their experiences as women and as members of a historically oppressed group and class, as they believed it was not possible to end one oppression without thinking about the other (Segura & Pierce, 1993). Furthermore, Chicana feminism allowed for “the interconnections of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation,” something that White feminism did not (Flores, 2000, p. 695). With this in mind, a Chicana feminism was born that called attention to sites of oppression and resistance (Flores, 2000) and allowed for “a critique of the male centered, patriarchal, and heterosexist family structure found within the Latino community” (González et al., 2004, pp. 24-25). Furthermore, writings and testimonios by the Latina Feminist Group (2001) were based on the fact that:

when theorizing about feminist latinidades, we reveal the inter-relationships among these systems of power....we are forced to acknowledge that occasionally institutions or discourses about which we are critical, such as...family, produce contradictory effects on us, serving as sources of disempowerment and autonomy, repression and privilege. (p. 19)

A Chicana/Latina feminist perspective gives me a critical lens to discuss these “contradictory effects” when manifested within students’ own families. Although community cultural wealth centers the richness found within the family/community context, it does not engage in critical conversations about the nuances and tensions that can be experienced within these networks. The



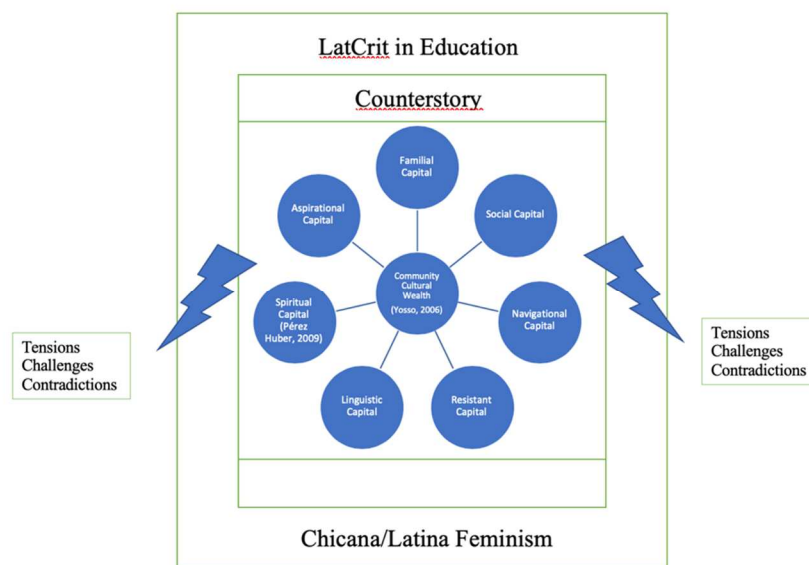
interconnections of various identities within this Chicana/Latina perspective in conjunction with the intercentricity of race and racism in LatCrit in Education allow me to unpack the multiple oppressions embedded within the stories of students and family members. I should also note that although LatCrit in Education includes an intersectional approach that acknowledges other forms of oppression in the Latino community (e.g., sexism and patriarchy), it does not place gender front and center as Chicana/Latina feminism does.

**Summary of Theoretical Frameworks**

As I detail in the next section that follows, literature surrounding Latino families, the parent-student relationship, and parental involvement is often atheoretical and/or utilizes Eurocentric and deficit-based theories that often do not provide representative accounts of the lived experiences of underrepresented communities.

Below is a visual representation of how LatCrit in Education, community cultural wealth, and Chicana/Latina feminism guide my conceptualization of the literature and foundations of these frameworks. This figure also offers an analytical tool by which to analyze my findings.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



At the center of the graphic is Yosso's (2006) community cultural wealth model with the addition of spiritual capital extended by Pérez Huber (2009). In Chapter 5, I detail how salient spiritual capital was in the narratives of participants. Community cultural wealth engages in counterstorytelling by challenging stereotypical notions about communities of color and instead illuminates their experiential knowledge and strengths. While this asset-based approach is needed, it does not account for the tensions, challenges, and contradictions that may exist within families. As such, I depict this with lightning bolts in the graphic. Lastly, both LatCrit in Education and Chicana/Latina feminism provide two necessary lenses to contextualize the larger macro-level systems reflected in the micro-level interactions between students and family. Doing so, allows me to speak to issues regarding citizenship, language, immigration, gender, and class and the ways they are rooted in larger systems of oppression (e.g., sexism, patriarchy, and classism).

### **A Brief Overview of Research on Latino Families**

Families are said to provide the first introductions for individuals to learn about gender identity and the types of interactions that should occur between men and women (Gaspar de Alba, 2014). For Chicanos in particular, families are often unique sites that blend gender and ethnicity to create specific understandings about masculinity and femininity (Segura & Pierce, 1993). These values and expectations, which often reflect gendered roles (e.g., *marianismo*) within the community, are then passed down to younger generations (Yarbro-Bejarano, 2006). In addition to beliefs that all Latinos are familistic, stereotypes also exist about how the Latino family upholds a traditional and patriarchal system where women are relegated to subordinate roles (Ibarra, 2004) and inflexible traditions (Baca Zinn, 2016). This supposed inflexibility has been and continues to be used by social scientists to portray Latino families as deficient and the

cause of their own subordination (Baca Zinn, 2016). I detail the historical and contemporary roots of familismo and marianismo below as two examples of majoritarian stories that have existed within research and popular media.

### **Familismo**

*Historical.* Historically, Latinos have been categorized as inherently collectivistic and family oriented. As a result, the term familismo has become commonplace in characterizing Latino families as putting family (immediate and extended) first, above and beyond one's own needs (Cauce & Domenech Rodriguez, 2002; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2012). Given the oppression and subordination faced by people of color on a daily basis, these strong family networks have been documented as sources of support and trust in resisting and navigating white society (Baca Zinn, 2016).

*Contemporary.* The belief that parents from underrepresented communities are unsupportive of their children's educational pursuits continues to this day (Kiyama & Harper, 2015). For example, Valencia and Black (2002) argued that scholars and those in media have and continue to assert the myth that Mexican American parents do not value education. These supposedly low expectations have been used to substantiate claims of cultural and intellectual inferiority (Rodríguez & Oseguera, 2015) and explain why students from underrepresented communities have lower college enrollment rates than their White counterparts (Kiyama & Harper, 2015). At the K-12 level, Martinez's (2013) study of four high school counselors in south Texas revealed deficit views of familismo with comments such as, "It's just the Hispanic culture. They don't want to let go...Maybe the parents are coming from Mexico and they might be educated parents but they want them here [local]" (p. 36). These deficit beliefs were not lost among Latino students, many of whom resisted these beliefs and continued to press forward to

achieve their college aspirations (Martinez, 2012). These same deficit views have also been found in the higher education context. Ornelas and Solorzano's (2004) qualitative study of six administrators at a California community college found that administrators held culturally deficit beliefs about their Latina/o students. Specifically, they believed that families did not place a strong enough emphasis/value on education and argued that this was the reason for students' low transfer rates. While these deficit perspectives were held by research participants and not the researchers themselves, there do exist studies in which researchers perpetuate deficit beliefs about the communities they are researching. One such study is that of Sy and Romero (2008) who conducted a qualitative study examining the experiences of 20 first- and second-generation Latinas who were either in college, had attended some college, or had already completed their bachelor's degree. In framing the study, Sy and Romero (2008) engaged in rhetoric that ascribed cultural stereotypes like *marianismo* as inherent to the Latino culture and the reason for which young Latinas were expected to live at home until marriage. Additionally, their view of *familismo* was one that implied that family ties are detrimental to the stress levels, academic performance, and college success of Latinas. To say this kind of familial involvement would prove detrimental and result in Latinas being unable to complete their education is far reaching and frames family-student relationships in a deficit manner that fails to also acknowledge the positive and supportive nature of these relationships. Furthermore, the researchers used language on several occasions that did not sit well with participants, and as such, reflected the biases and lens with which the researchers were operating from. When talking about how participants provided financial assistance to their families, researchers insisted on using the word "obligation," though participants strongly objected to the use of this word. Specifically, participants viewed this process as one that was voluntary as opposed to obligatory. Furthermore,

the researchers claimed that “the time they [Latina college students] take away from their schoolwork to check up on their siblings and worry about whether their siblings are doing okay may detract from their ability to focus attention on their academics” (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 221). Although this last claim speaks to some of the challenges participants experienced within their family, it is difficult to separate this from a largely deficit approach to the framing of their study and findings.

Despite the fact that deficit perspectives still exist throughout the literature, researchers have demonstrated that Latino families do in fact hold high expectations for their childrens’ education (Valencia & Black, 2002). Within the field of higher education, scholars have used familismo as a guiding conceptual framework to explain the often strong relationships Latina/o students have with their families and the important role the family unit often plays in influencing the educational decisions of Latinas (Hurtado et al., 2010; Martinez, 2013; Molinary, 2007; Torres, 2003), decisions which are often made with the goal of giving back to their own communities (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

Although many Latino families may exhibit characteristics of familismo, it is important to remember that not all Latino families are familistic nor is this value unique to this population; rather, patterns of familismo may depend on one’s context (i.e., class, generation, and immigration) (Acosta, 2010).

### **Marianismo**

*Historical.* While machismo is said to be ingrained in men, marianismo is a stereotype used to characterize women as responsible for cooking, caring for siblings, cleaning, and fulfilling other household duties (Harklau, 2013; Ibarra, 2004; Liang, Knauer-Turner, Molenaar, & Price, 2017). Although these gender scripts may not exist in every family, some Chicanas are

aware of gender discrepancies within their own families and larger community (Harklau, 2013). Oftentimes, these norms may be reinforced by mothers and other female relatives within the Chicano community (Leyva, 2011), some of whom may resist any Chicana that tries to challenge these beliefs (Carranza, 2012). Moreover, mothers in particular are said to take on the responsibility of “teaching their daughters how to be Chicanas knowledgeable in cultural traditions and behaviors that signal their gender and ethnicity” (Segura & Pierce, 1993, p. 77). Scholars have noted that for those Latinas who may have grown up with traditional gender scripts, some have continued to uphold expectations that women fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. For example, beliefs like the following may exist: “...the husband is the head of the home and the wife is the helpmate. I see being a woman as a high calling to be a wife and supporter of a husband” (Molinary, 2007, p. 69). Furthermore, some Latinas have reported facing pressure to get married when they are young and immediately start a family (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; Harklau, 2013).

**Contemporary.** While these may be the experiences of some Latinas, others report receiving messages about the importance of being an independent and passionate individual (Molinary, 2007). In fact, some Latina mothers have been critical of the practice of machismo, continued gender inequalities, and the withholding of women’s rights as humans within the Latino community (Carranza, 2012) arguing that these practices are rooted in patriarchy and/or promoting the submission of women (Villenas and Moreno, 2001). For some, this intergenerational family-communication (Vasquez, 2014) that occurs between older and younger generations has the power to promote the independence and education of women in such a way that has a lasting influence over the way femininity is conceptualized over generations (Vasquez, 2014).

Still, it is often the case that Latinas experience a complex array of messages that are simultaneously gendered and promote independence. Villenas and Moreno (2001) argued that “for Latinas/Chicanas, these contradictory gender teachings often involve knowing how to be una mujer de hogar (a woman of the home), while at the same time knowing how to valerse por si misma (be self-reliant)” (p. 673). It is at this complex intersection where:

parental/familial consejos reflect social, cultural, and institutional structures that confine them to prescribed gendered and raced roles. Yet these consejos also empower them to conceptualize new ways of moving across and within borderlands while resisting dominant power structures, such as patriarchy, colonization, and racism—even those embedded within their own families. (Espino, 2016, pp. 184-185)

Similarly, Vasquez (2014) noted that the second-generation Latinas in her study reflected on the unsupportive experiences they had with their parents, which led them to want to create new visions for what their own daughters, as women, could accomplish.

### **Aspirational Capital: Familial Encouragement for Pursuing Higher Education**

Although some Latino parents may have lower levels of educational attainment and not fully understand the U.S. educational system, especially if they are immigrants, they still encourage their children to pursue higher education (Auerbach, 2006; Cavazos et al., 2010; Ceja 2004; Gonzales, 2012; Kirk, Lewis-Moss, Nilsen, & Colvin, 2011; Yosso, 2006). Families often encourage and support their daughters to receive an education due to the belief that education can lead to liberation (Espino, 2016) and provide opportunities to escape poverty and oppression (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; Leyva, 2011). Additionally, parents often believe that one’s educational level is tied to socioeconomic status (Alvarez, 2015). In fact, many Latino parents encourage their daughters to earn college degrees so that they can have better job opportunities and not have

to endure the same types of obstacles (e.g., manual labor and low wages) they had to endure because they were not college educated (Delgado Bernal, 2001, 2002; McAllister, 2012; Moje & Martinez, 2007; Molinary, 2007; Peralta et al., 2013; Perez, Rodriguez, & Guadarrama, 2015). Additionally, Latino parents point to the positive role that older, college educated siblings may set for their younger siblings (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Fulgini et al., 2007; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). As McAllister (2012) noted, the majority of Mexican American students in her study discussed the tremendous influence their older siblings had on establishing “expectations for college attendance” (p. 186). Additionally, mothers in particular have been found to have high educational aspirations for their daughters (Espino, 2016; Gándara, 1982). Furthermore, Espino (2016) found that mothers tended to encourage their daughters through empowering consejos that reflected personal beliefs about how “their own limited educational experiences... affected their freedom of choice” (Espino, 2016, p. 200). Similarly, McAllister (2012) found that most of the Mexican American students in her study reported that they were influenced to go to college as a result of “implicit or explicit verbal expectations, encouragement, and/or college attendance” by someone from their immediate or extended family (p. 176). For many students, listening to their parents’ stories of struggle and hardship and/or having gone through those experiences themselves shaped the ways they thought about college and for whom they wanted to receive an education (Alvarez, 2015).

### **Tensions, Challenges, and Contradictions**

Although many parents and families have high educational aspirations for their children as noted above, decisions about going to college and where to attend may reflect a more complicated narrative. For example, McAllister’s (2012) study found that a small group of Mexican American college students did not receive strong encouragement or expectations from



their parents about pursuing postsecondary education. As noted by Diaz de Sabatés (2007), the educational journeys of Latinas are often met with “surprises, improvisations, lack of support, misunderstandings, and devaluing circumstances emanating from the college environment...families and communities” (p. 24). As previously mentioned, families often represent complex sites of contradictions and tensions. While many Latino students describe their family as supportive of their college pursuits, the truth remains that this feeling of support may not always be perceived or experienced by all Latino students. In the section that follows, I highlight some of the tensions that have been captured by researchers, particularly as it relates to gender.

### **College-Application Process**

As Kiyama (2010) was able to uncover through her interviews with parents of K-5 Mexican American students, parents held aspirations for their children to one day attend college, but these same aspirations were often “complex, and sometimes incomplete, as steps required to achieve these goals can be misunderstood or unknown” (p. 350). In another study, Alvarez (2015) illuminated some of the complexities that existed for Latino parents of high school students. Findings revealed many parents were unaware of any prerequisites for applying to college, did not understand the differences between a community college and four-year university, and did not understand the competitive nature of getting into a college (Alvarez, 2015). Given this overall lack of clarity surrounding the college process, Alvarez (2015) argued parents may be “fearful of the college-going process and...make choices based on incorrect information” (p. 61). For example, some parents may encourage their children to attend a local community college (Alvarez, 2015; Perez et al., 2015) or believe that if their children start at the community college they can easily transfer to a four-year institution (Perez et al., 2015).

## **Geographical Considerations**

When considering which colleges to apply to and eventually attend, Latino/a students often report distance from home and family preferences to remain close to home as important factors to consider in their college decision-making process (Jabbar, Serrata, Epstein, & Sánchez, 2017; Martinez, 2013; McAllister, 2012). Similarly, others have found that many Latinas report that their parents are hesitant to let them move away for college and feel pressure to either live at home or attend a school relatively close to home, which would make it easier to visit and/or make weekend trips back home (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; González et al., 2004; Hernández, 2015; Torres, 2003). Parental expectations to remain at home may stem from the desire to closely monitor their daughter's activities due to their concern for their daughter's safety (Hernández, 2015) and status as an unmarried woman (González et al., 2004; Harklau, 2013). Additional parental hesitation may stem from simply not understanding the college process, academic work, and college life and therefore being uneasy about a culture they know nothing about (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Leyva, 2011; Martinez, 2013). For those Latinas who decide to move away for college despite parental concerns or disapproval, relationships with their families may become strained (Hernández, 2015) with accusations of abandoning their family and showing disloyalty (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Molinary, 2004). These same tensions and accusations may continue even beyond the baccalaureate as Espino (2016) found that Mexican American PhD women often endured beliefs that "they were a traitor to their family...placing work ahead of one's culture and community" (p. 192).

## **The Role of Gender**

Some Latinas have reported parental disapproval of their college pursuits due to beliefs that a woman's purpose is to become a mother and wife and that an education is not necessary to

fulfill those roles (Molinary, 2007). For example, Rodriguez (2013) noted that a Latina from her study talked about her grandmother's desire for her to remain at home "while attending college and focus on more domestic issues instead of her career" (p. 22). Additionally, Liang et al. (2017) found that when Latina college students were asked about their family and academic experiences, they described differential treatment as a result of gender, double standards, and patriarchy. Highlighting the many tensions and contradictions that Latinas may experience in pursuing graduate school, Espino (2016) found that although parents and family members may have supported their pursuit of an undergraduate degree, "the pressures to conform to traditional female heteronormative social roles as daughter, wife, and mother became more apparent in their parent's discourse (p. 200). Some studies have revealed that these pressures and familial expectations of what it means to be a woman may contribute to the higher levels of stress reported by Latinas (Jean-Van Hell, 2007). In fact, these familial expectations may be more influential for Latinas as they were more likely than Latino men to report that being close to home would allow them to continue caretaking responsibilities for a family member or return on weekends to help out the family (Jabbar et al., 2017). Interestingly, a recent study conducted by Kouyoumdjian et al. (2017) asked Latino college students (both men and women) to list any challenges that would prevent them from graduating from a four-year institution and caretaking responsibilities was reported as the fifth most frequent response. Responses within this umbrella of caretaking responsibilities included examples such as being a single parent or taking care of younger siblings while attending school full-time. As noted by Delgado Bernal (2006), these responsibilities (emotional and financial) taken on by Latinas within their family and community often take an emotional toll on them, one not experienced by traditionally middle-class students. This toll has also been documented at the post baccalaureate level among Mexican American

PhD women who described feeling emotionally exhausted at not being able to balance their career aspirations and family responsibilities (Espino, 2016).

One possible explanation for these caretaking responsibilities may be due to the fact that Latino families are often interdependent of one another with each person taking on a role that ultimately contributes to the survival of the family as a unit (Alvarez, 2015). Related to this and as noted above, Latinas oftentimes play a critical role in financially contributing to their family (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; Fulgini et al., 2007; Leyva, 2011; Martinez, 2013) or helping out with household responsibilities (Reyes III, Valles, & Salinas, 2011). Fearing the challenges that might be brought on by their children leaving home and not being able to contribute in the same ways that they did before, parents may suggest to their children that they should attend a local community college or postpone their college plans (Alvarez, 2015). Importantly, Alvarez (2015) was able to capture much of the complexity that exists when students must abandon their roles or reduce the extent to which they are able to fulfill those roles. Studies have also shown that some students might make the decision to step away from college for some time or reduce their course load to help manage family matters (Jabbar et al., 2017). Similarly, Arana, Castañeda-Sound, Blanchard, and Aguilar (2011) found that students who were non-persisters in college often reported a family crisis or unexpected event as having caused a major hurdle while pursuing their college education.

It should also be noted that the roles mentioned above are not always static and can be renegotiated as Jabbar et al. (2017) found that family members also encouraged Latinas to move away for college. Drawing from three years of participant observations at a bilingual outreach program for high school parents, Auerbach (2004) noted that the knowledge gained by parents about college influenced the ways they chose to support their students in college. Most notably,

these parents reduced the household chores that students previously had to complete as they believed their students had a greater responsibility to their studies (Auerbach, 2004). Finally, it is important to remember that context (e.g., societal-level changes, circumstances, and life-events) all have the power to create shifts in gender norms (Vasquez, 2014).

### **College Generational Status**

Several studies have revealed an important relationship between generational status and parental beliefs on the acquisition of education. For example, Jabbar et al. (2017) found that first-generation Latino/a students often described “a lack of familial support or the belief that higher education was not important to their families” (p. 8) more so than their second-generation peers. Other studies have noted that first-generation Latina students are more likely to report experiencing conflict with their parents about their educational decisions to leave their home and family (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; Gloria & Castellanos, 2013; Torres, 2003) and a lack of understanding about college life or what it takes to be successful in college (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; Gloria & Castellanos, 2013; Sy & Romero, 2008; Torres, 2003). In turn, this lack of understanding may be tied to parental expectations that daughters come home regularly (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Molinary, 2004), assist with finances (Fulgini et al., 2007; Torres, 2003), and answer phone calls regularly (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). On the other hand, Latina second-generation college students have been found to report that their parents assumed they would attend college, stressed higher education as a number one priority, and understood the rigors of academic life, thus, students experienced less pressure to make frequent visits home (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Molinary, 2007).

### **Parental Involvement and Support**

Scholarship on the role of parental involvement, support, and engagement are abundant within the K-12 setting, yet few and far between within the higher education setting. Because parental involvement is often viewed in a one-dimensional way (Kiyama & Harper, 2015), parents are often depicted as uninvolved when the reality is that they often experience barriers that potentially limit the extent to which they can actually be involved in school related programs (Hill & Torres, 2010). Within higher education, Kiyama and Harper (2015) argued that “there appear to be uncertainty and inconsistencies regarding the role that parents and families should play in students’ lives” (p. 26). Additionally, Sax and Wartman (2010) argued that research capturing the college experience has typically ignored the role of parental involvement as an influential factor. As noted above in the previous section, several studies within higher education have done well to capture the support and engagement that families often provide to Latina college students (Gonzalez, 2012; Jabbar et al., 2017, Kouyoumdjian et al., 2017).

### **General Overview**

Research on concepts like support has often taken on very narrow definitions, which inevitably contribute to the continuation of unidimensional perspectives. For example, one study by Kirk et al. (2011) measured parental support as whether or not parents helped with homework and whether parents gave students information about college options after high school. Definitions such as this leave out many parents who may be low-income, immigrants to the U.S., and/or did not go to college. Just because parents may not have the capability of helping their children with homework or know about college does not mean that they cannot or do not provide their children with support in other ways. Most research documenting parental involvement has been quantitative in nature noting the positive role of parental involvement in shaping students’ self-reported gains and higher levels of student engagement (Shoup, Gonyea, and Kuh, 2009).

Other studies have explored the role of parental engagement on the academic, social, and personal development of students (Harper, Sax, & Wolf, 2012), the frequency and mode of communication with parents (Wolf, Sax, & Harper, 2009), distinguished between involvement by mothers and fathers (Sax & Weintraub, 2014), and examined student perceptions of parental involvement (Pryor, Hurtado, Sharkness, & Korn, 2007). When examining gender, these studies often found that women were in contact with their parents more frequently than men (Wolf et al., 2009). When examining race and ethnicity, these studies found that students of color were more likely to report feeling that their parent's involvement in college related decisions was "too little" (Pryor et al., 2007).

In trying to operationalize types of support, these quantitative studies continue to fall short of capturing the multidimensionality of this construct (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012) and reduce relationships to simplistic definitions. For example, Palbusa and Gauvain (2017) operationalized two types of parental support: instrumental ("parent's availability as a college resource and parents' provision of useful information about college") and emotional ("parents understood and cared about the participant's feelings when they talked about college") (p. 109). What purpose do these definitions serve when, based on Palbusa and Gauvain's (2017) definition of parental support, presumably only parents who have themselves gone to college would qualify as providing parental support? Yet, despite their parents not being able to personally understand their collegiate experiences, first-generation Latinas often cite their parents and families as providing support. Still, most definitions of parental support found within the literature leave much of the support provided by communities of color unacknowledged.

The notion of parental involvement has similarly been narrowly defined by scholars. In one study, Shoup et al. (2009) defined parental involvement as a combination of the frequency of

communication with parents (measured as in-person or electronic contact with a parent/guardian) and the frequency of parental intervention (measured as parents/guardians contacting the college to help solve a problem for their student). This definition of parental involvement provides a very one-dimensional depiction of involvement by including parental intervention as a construct of involvement as it excludes parents who may not know how to navigate the many offices on a college campus or who have no personal experience with higher education.

Though most quantitative studies tend to take on narrow definitions of concepts like involvement, some researchers have done important work in complicating the traditional narrative usually seen in research. One such study by LeFevre and Shaw (2012) measured both formal and informal types of involvement, defining informal involvement as “behaviors, activities, and emotional support that occur in the home” (p. 710). Using a longitudinal dataset, they found that formal and informal involvement were predictive of students’ academic achievement during the secondary school years (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). As noted by LeFevre & Shaw (2012), many scholars who write about parent involvement focus only on formal support, yet their study confirms the need to examine parent involvement as a multidimensional construct. Similarly, Auerbach (2006) contended that “educators should recognize moral support and the ‘invisible sacrifices’ that accompany it as indispensable forms of parent engagement that motivate and strengthen many students from immigrant families” (p. 290).

All too often, we see how notions of parental involvement overlook other types or ways of support, thereby perpetuating narratives that depict Latinos and other underrepresented groups in a deficit manner. Scholars have recently noted that existing work on this topic is limited and should expand to looking at significant others (Perna & Kurban, 2013) and family involvement (Harper et al., 2012). Perna and Kurban (2013) also critiqued the “tendency to define parental



involvement using the norms of White-middle-class involvement as well as the emphasis on traditional, nuclear family structures” (p. 20). Similarly, Kiyama and Harper (2015), argued that many of the parent-student frameworks have stereotypical perspectives of underrepresented populations embedded within them, thus, more critical and expansive work is necessary within this area of study. Also missing from this literature are “the needs and questions of parents of first-generation students, underrepresented students, or limited-income students” (Donovan & McKelfresh, 2008, p. 390). As is often the case, these quantitative studies use large datasets with White students comprising the majority of the sample, therefore it is worth asking how accurately concepts such as support and involvement reflect the experiences of students of color. When colleges and universities focus on “White, middle-and upper class, 18-22-year-old students with college educated parents” they miss out on “a significant population of students and their families” (Donovan & McKelfresh, 2008, p. 390).

### **Latinx Specific Studies**

One such example comes from Jabbar et al.’s (2017) study documenting the ways families offer financial support and in-kind financial support defined as “goods and services gifted instead of cash or monetary donations” (p. 8). For the Latino/a students in their sample, in-kind support manifested itself through receiving transportation to and from college, having their children cared for, and being able to live at home to save money (Jabbar et al., 2017). Studies have suggested that Latinas may adopt a number of different strategies when balancing their family life and schoolwork. For example, Espinoza (2016) documented the ways that the Latina doctoral students in her study were integrators or separators. Integrators were those women who were explicit in communicating their responsibilities in school to their families and leaned on their families as part of their support system to help them be academically successful. Separators

were those women who actively kept their family life and schoolwork separate so as to reduce any stress or conflict they might experience. It should be noted that these women often engaged in a delicate balancing act and learning process that required multiple attempts at trying to find a strategy that best worked for them as they navigated their studies and relationships with their family. Similarly, Rodriguez (2013) characterized the coping strategies of Latina/o college students in her study into three groups, those that leaned on their family as a support system, those who separated their family from coping through obstacles, and those who built a new family consisting of peers and mentors.

Even in college where students are presumed to be independent, Latino students often continue to maintain relationships with their family. Many Latinas often lean on the relationships with their family and community to persist through the K-20 pipeline (Gonzales, 2012). Specifically, Latina college students often look to siblings, parents, and extended family networks for support and encouragement (Carey, 2016; Cavazos, Johnson, & Sparrow, 2010; Martinez, 2013; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Sapp, Kiyama, & Dache-Garbino, 2016; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2015). Kolkhorst et al., (2010) found that this support manifested itself through calls/emails/cards/packages, encouragement, visits, financial support, and asking questions about students' lives. Kouyoumdjian et al. (2017) found that when Latino/a students were asked to list factors that would support them in graduating from a four-year institution, family emerged as the most salient factor. Students who were also parents frequently mentioned their children as a source of support. Students who commute to college from home, often note the benefit of maintaining a close proximity to existing networks (e.g., family members) that can provide college support (Jabbar et al., 2017). Similarly, Hernández (2015) noted that Latina students also expressed a desire to maintain strong ties to friends, family, and

their church. These positive relationships and students' understanding of their parents' sacrifices and expectations often play a critical role in motivating students through college (Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012). Two recent studies conducted by Castro and Cortez (2017) and Jabbar et al. (2017) have documented the emotional (encouragement, support, and motivation) and financial support that Latino families demonstrate throughout the community college transfer process. Additionally, Rodriguez (2013) found that when coping with college related obstacles, all of the Latino students in her study interacted with their families to varying degrees, with some describing their families as being integral to the process.

For many students, siblings play an important role in passing along information they gained from their own personal experiences navigating institutions of higher education to other siblings and relatives (Jabbar et al., 2017; Kaczynski, 2011; Sy & Romero, 2008). It is not lost upon students, especially those who are the oldest in their family and the first to navigate the higher education system, how important it is to set an example for younger siblings by "promoting education or ideas of social justice" (Delgado Bernal, 2006, p. 123). For some women, this might mean educating their brothers on how to treat and respect women rather than mimic the behavior of machistas at home (Delgado Bernal, 2006).

### **Summary of Literature and Study Contributions**

In the following paragraphs, I detail a brief summary of the gaps outlined in the literature above and the ways I see my study making contributions to the field.

(1) Challenging (mis) representations and stereotypes of Latinos and Latino families: I intentionally draw from asset-based frameworks (i.e., community cultural wealth and LatCrit in Education) to help position my own study and better understand/explain the experiences of my participants.

(2) The role of family and student aspirations in the college-going process: Answering Kiyama's (2010) call for future work to examine family and student educational aspirations to understand how that might play a role in students' college-going process, my study incorporated the perspective of family members and Latina/x college students to understand how the educational aspirations of both groups have influenced the educational trajectories of students. Questions within the interview protocol captured the college knowledge of family members during the college-choice process. Importantly, I paid close attention to how gender, class, and citizenship status affected the educational messages family members transmitted to Latina/x college students.

(3) Lack of research about the role of parents in the college context: My study fills a major gap in the literature by looking at the extent to which family members, not just parents, have shaped the educational trajectories of Latina/x college students. Questions within the interview protocol sought to capture a better understanding of the relationships students have with their families and the ways that concepts like support and involvement manifest throughout students' college experience.

(4) One-dimensional research on parental involvement: My study placed the role of race/ethnicity and gender at the forefront and was guided by a LatCrit in Education and Chicana/Latina framework that gave me the tools to investigate how multiple identities come together to uniquely shape the experiences of Latina/x college students. Additionally, my study recognized the need to offer an expansive view of family as opposed to an examination of parents.

(5) Lack of research from the perspective of families: In addition to understanding the perspectives of Latina/x college students about their family members, my study also placed

family members at the forefront to understand how they see their role in shaping the educational trajectories of students. Importantly, my study highlighted family members' stories rather than receiving secondhand accounts from students about their family members.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design**

According to Delgado Bernal (1998), “how educational research is conducted significantly contributes to what and whose history, community, and knowledge is legitimated” (p. 574). As explained in Chapter 2, there continue to be studies that promote anti-deficit beliefs about Latinx students and their families. Additionally, many of the studies focusing on parental involvement elevate White middle-class notions (Donovan & McKelfresh, 2008) that fail to account for the experiences of communities of color. As such, the purpose of this study was to utilize asset-based frameworks to explore the role family plays in shaping the educational experiences and trajectories of Latina/x college students. This chapter begins with an overview of a pilot study I conducted during the 2016-2017 academic year. I highlight the study’s objectives, procedures, findings, and limitations. Next, I discuss the use of a qualitative, narrative inquiry approach and why it was an appropriate methodology for my study. Finally, I discuss my research design (i.e., research sites, sampling and recruitment, data collection, and data analysis), how I established trustworthiness, my positionality, and limitations of the study. Conducting a pilot study for my dissertation was important in helping me to gain a better sense as to how Latina students thought about their families throughout their educational experiences. It allowed me to refine the research questions that I eventually used for my dissertation, helped to determine whether my theoretical framework was suitable, and provided an opportunity to engage in an initial run through of my interview protocol.

#### **Pilot Study**

##### **Objectives of the Pilot Study**

The purpose of my pilot study was to explore the ways Latina college students navigated relationships with their families and understand how they defined concepts such as support and

engagement. Using a qualitative design, this study was informed by LatCrit in Education and was guided by the following question and sub questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Latina college students on the role of family members throughout their educational trajectory?
  - a. What is the nature of their relationships with their families while they are in college?
  - b. How do they define familial support and familial engagement?

### **Procedure for Pilot Study**

*Participants.* The participants for this study included seven Latina college students enrolled at West Coast University (WCU) throughout the 2016-2017 academic year. Students were recruited based on the following criteria: identify as a woman; identify as Latina; and be enrolled as an undergraduate student at WCU. Recruitment emails were distributed to various colleagues who had direct access to Latina undergraduate students. In addition, some participants were recruited via snowball sampling as a result of participants' personal networks. Each participant was given a pseudonym to help ensure anonymity.

Participants ranged from sophomores to seniors with majors mainly comprised within the social sciences (e.g., psychology and sociology). Many of the women came from immigrant families with at least one parent of Mexican origin. According to students, most parents' formal schooling took place in Mexico and ranged from elementary to high school. While two women reported that their mothers had obtained either a two- or four-year degree in the U.S., all other participants reported that no parent had attended college. Although the majority of parents had no personal experience with the U.S. higher education system, the women in the study were still

able to access navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) via older siblings who had traversed a variety of higher education institutions.

***Personal Interviews.*** The focus of these initial interviews was to examine the role of families in shaping the educational aspirations of Latinas and the ways Latinas come to define familial support and engagement throughout their college experience. Additionally, I was interested in understanding how these women navigated relationships with their families while in college. This study used an in-depth phenomenological technique for interviewing so as to understand the subjective experiences of participants and the meaning they ascribed to these experiences (Seidman, 2013). The semi-structured interview process reflected an abridged version of Seidman's (2013) three interview series with interviews taking place at one-time point due to scheduling and time availability of students. Interviews began with a *focused life history* to provide context for their current experiences (e.g., Tell me about yourself and your family), followed by *details of experience* to understand their current experiences related to the study's topic (e.g., Who do you consider as part of your support system while in college?), and concluding with a *reflection on meaning* to understand how participants come to make meaning of their experiences (e.g., How do you come to define familial support and make meaning of this while in college?).

### **Summary of Pilot Study Findings**

Many of the women were from immigrant families whose parents did not personally experience the education system in the U.S. Students recalled that their families expressed mostly positive messages about the importance of education, doing well in school, and going to college. These findings were consistent with previous research that found Latino parents have high educational expectations for their children despite not fully being able to assist their



children in navigating the various stages of their educational career (Alfaro, O'Reilly-Díaz, & López, 2014; Cavazos et al., 2010; Ceja 2004; Gonzales, 2012; Yosso, 2006). Through a LatCrit perspective, I was able to point to the ways many of these women were particularly impacted by their SES and parents' identities as immigrants. For example, students recalled that their parents talked about the importance of education as a means for social mobility knowing full well that their children would be able to access more jobs with a college degree. As noted earlier, many parents largely immigrated from Mexico and once they arrived in the U.S., they had no other choice but to start working to help out their families.

With regard to notions of familial support and engagement, Latinas were able to offer their very own unique understandings of how they defined these concepts and the specific ways they manifested throughout their own personal relationships with their family members. First and foremost, by employing a LatCrit in Education framework at the onset of the study, I was able to capture and center the experiences of Latinas. As stated by Valencia and Black (2002), "in the production of scholarship dealing with Mexican Americans, we often have to deconstruct inaccurate and unsound writing before we can construct new works" (p. 99). Therefore, this study sought to challenge dominant ideology surrounding parent involvement literature that largely pulls from White, middle class experiences and instead highlight the experiential knowledge of Latina college students. By doing so, I was able to capture examples of support and understandings of engagement that I argue are unique to the experiences of Latinas and deserve to be seen as legitimate examples found within the literature base.

Findings from this study revealed that Latinas often experienced high levels of support in addition to contradictions and difficulties from family members. While parent literature offers examples of how parents may provide financial, social, and emotional support (Kiyama &

Harper, 2015), my study revealed examples that both confirmed and extended this work. Furthermore, findings revealed that fathers, mothers, and other family members demonstrated different types of support for Latinas. For example, some women specifically identified their mothers as providing nutritional support while fathers tended to provide various levels of financial support. Others described receiving emotional support from their siblings while others noted the influential role their extended family members also played.

With regard to engagement, Kiyama and Harper (2015) note that there is a lack of knowledge about the extent to which familial engagement may vary across a number of identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, etc.). This study revealed that, as first-generation Latinas, participants discussed that their parents did not understand much about college or their experiences inside and outside the classroom. Importantly, participants did not fault their families for this lack of understanding. Additionally, the notion of familial engagement did not seem to play an important role in the lives of these women.

Finally, the contradictions and conflicts faced by Latinas revealed the particular ways gender and ethnicity played out within gender roles and relationships between family members. Utilizing a LatCrit in Education perspective allowed me to see the intercentricity of race and gender as many Latinas described growing up with fathers who were machistas or patriarchal. These Latinas had enough personal agency to engage in transformational acts of feminism that allowed them to challenge the status quo in their families and, in some cases, encourage their own mothers to take on new roles within the family structure.

### **Takeaways**

Though I realized that LatCrit in Education was helpful to describe larger issues that Latinas may face, I found myself needing additional frameworks that could tackle the role of

gender head on and illuminate the strengths derived from families. In terms of my research questions, I realized that the sub question of how students define support and involvement was unnecessary as most students used involvement interchangeably with support. With regard to participant recruitment, although my study was open to anyone who identified as Latina, the majority of my sample identified as being of Mexican descent, with only one woman identifying as Puerto Rican and Mexican. As I made note in Chapter 1, Puerto Rican and Central American women have similar educational attainment rates as women of Mexican descent. Knowing that the Latino community is diverse and that much of the literature tends to focus on students of Mexican descent, I knew that for my dissertation I would want to include a more ethnically diverse sample of Latino students. Furthermore, I felt that it was important to expand the voices of Latinos that are traditionally talked about within the research. In addition to ethnic diversity, I also found myself wanting to learn more about the positive experiences and challenges experienced by students who commuted from home and the extent to which their experiences were similar or different from the experiences of students who lived on campus or in their own apartment. This pilot study also made me realize that I needed to include the voices of family members to understand their perceptions firsthand and whether or not students' and families' perceptions of experiences complimented or contradicted one another. As one of my goals for the pilot study was to test out the interview protocol, I was able to carry many takeaways to implement for the dissertation. First, I found that it was necessary to either ask specific questions about family or probe more about the role of various family members. I also realized that it would be beneficial for me to get to know more of students' family background and early childhood experiences to gain more context and track patterns or changes over the years. Though I conducted one interview in the pilot study, it became clear that I would benefit greatly from

conducting at least two interviews which would allow me an opportunity to debrief and go over any questions that remained from the first interview.

### **Qualitative Approach**

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a qualitative study is best suited when researchers are interested in understanding “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 6). In addition to a focus on meaning and understanding, a second characteristic of a qualitative study is that the researcher becomes the primary instrument for embarking in the collection of data and its analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As opposed to a more positivist approach that seeks to test out hypotheses, the goal of qualitative studies is to build on to new or existing theories and concepts through the development of themes based on the data collected and the theoretical framework(s) guiding the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A last characteristic of a qualitative study involves the use of rich description to distinguish one’s findings by providing information on the context and participants involved in the study and using data to further support one’s conclusions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Ontological Orientation**

In any study, researchers are influenced by their own philosophical orientations that impact how they think about the world. As such, I tend to lean more towards an interpretive/constructivist lens that argues for multiple interpretations of a socially constructed reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This lens is also suitable for this study in that I interviewed both students and family members and captured both similar and contradictory interpretations of how they experienced students’ educational journeys. However, I also ascribe to a more critical

orientation that argues that these realities must be interpreted through “political, social, and cultural contexts” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 12) or, in my case, using LatCrit in Education and Chicana/Latina Feminism to examine how class, gender, and ethnicity influence the experiences of Latina/x college students and their family members.

### **Chicana Feminist Epistemology**

Drawing from the work of Chicana feminists in the 70s and 80s, scholars have pushed forward with the creation of a Chicana feminist epistemology that allows for the theoretical and epistemological framework for analyzing the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas. As it stands, “very little research paints nuanced and complex portraits of Chicana/Latina lives from which we can consider their cultural/gendered perspectives, resources, and resilience in the face of institutions of power” (Villenas, Godinez, Delgado Bernal, & Elenes, 2006, p. 4). According to Delgado Bernal (1998), a Chicana feminist epistemology allows one to understand the knowledge surrounding Chicanas and the ways individuals try to legitimize or delegitimize the experiences of Chicanas. Borrowing from Strauss and Corbin, Delgado Bernal (1998) proposed that Chicana researchers within educational research possess cultural intuition which can be derived from four sources: “one’s personal experience, the existing literature, one’s professional experience, and the analytical research process itself” (p. 563). In thinking about Delgado Bernal’s (1998) concept of cultural intuition, I recognize that I can better understand the stories of my participants because I too am Latina, however, I also understand that their experiences may diverge from my own (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Malagon et al., 2009). In fact, Delgado Bernal (1998) cautioned researchers to not assume that their participants will have had similar experiences as them. Similarly, the Latina Feminist Group (2001) has been vocal about the need for a “model that would seek mutually validating perspectives among Latinas, mindful of the

complexities of our individual experiences” (p. 14). My own awareness of previous studies that have used a deficit approach to depict Latino families further compels me to engage in a research and analytical process that portrays the lived realities of Latina/x college students and their families. Throughout this analytical process, I engaged in a constant dialogue with participants by asking additional and clarifying questions to have a more complete understanding of the data.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

As noted by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), “the study of narrative... is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (p. 2). Additionally, a narrative analysis places an emphasis on *how* participants make meaning of their experiences (Bazeley, 2013). Narrative inquiry involves the following dimensions: temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Temporality highlights the fact that people, events, and objects should always be described as having a past, present, and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As noted by Gerson and Horowitz (2002), “people experience their lives not as a set of factors or variables, but rather as the unfolding of events, perceptions, and feelings over time” (p. 206). Temporality was central to my study in that I examined trajectories which necessarily capture experiences over time. As such, participants recalled students’ past experiences at the K-12 level as well as community college for those who attended. Participants also talked about the present as it pertained to current relationships between students and family members and they also talked about the future in terms of students’ educational and career aspirations. By drawing from the method of life histories, I was able to document messages about education and how they shifted across generations. Sociality refers to the personal conditions (internal feelings of participant and researcher) and social conditions (forces within a person’s environment that make up their context) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Within the interview process, it was important for me to

learn more about participants' migration and labor experiences as part of their life histories. People's personal and social conditions/experiences are fluid (Riessman, 1993) and subject to broader contexts involving cultural, social, institutional, and historical mechanisms (Bazeley, 2013; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Lawler, 2002). This fluidity was important in my study as the relationships between students and family members evolved over time. Furthermore, Riessman (1993) argued that through narratives we are able to "examine gender inequities, racial oppression, and other practices of power that may be taken for granted by individual speakers" (p. 5). Utilizing a LatCrit in Education and Chicana/Latina Feminism lens was key here to be able to speak to oppression faced outside and within participants' communities. Finally, place involves the specific, physical location in which an event or inquiry takes place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Informed by my epistemological stance and my theoretical frameworks, a narrative inquiry approach is most suitable to conduct a thorough analysis of the broader sites of oppression that have impacted and/or currently impact the lived experiences of Latina/x college students and their family members. Furthermore, knowing that their experiences are complex, fluid, and subject to context, a narrative methodology is most appropriate for illustrating the richness and complexity of their experiences through their stories (Bell, 2002; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

## **Research Design**

### **Research Site**

West Coast University (pseudonym) or WCU is a public, four-year university located in Southern California. With a total enrollment of over 40,000 students, WCU is home to 22% of undergraduates identifying as Hispanic and 57% identifying as female. Furthermore, over three quarters of all undergraduate students are originally from California.

## **Sampling and Participant Recruitment**

I employed a purposeful sampling procedure that best reflected the purpose of the study (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and as such, 10 students were selected based on the following criteria: be 18 years of age or older; self-identify as Latina/x<sup>6</sup>; be enrolled as an undergraduate student at WCU; and have at least one family member willing to participate in the study. Before participating in the study, students were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) which I used to confirm eligibility and gather a better sense of each student prior to the first interview. To recruit participants, I sent out my study recruitment email and flyer to various colleagues of mine with pre-established networks and direct links to undergraduate students at WCU across departments in Education, Chicana/o Studies, Sociology, African American Studies, and Labor Studies. Within these departments, I was also able to give a brief overview of my study and left my contact information for anyone who might be interested in participating. Additionally, I canvassed the internet for a list of Latino specific organizations and sent out my recruitment email and flyer. Student affairs contacts within Housing, Greek life, and the Transfer Center were also helpful in spreading the word about my study. Participants were also asked to pass along study information within their own personal networks, a process reflective of snowball sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given that the recruitment process was difficult I conducted multiple rounds of recruitment to reach a final number of 10 students.

## **Data Collection**

---

<sup>6</sup> One student identified as nonbinary, and as such, I use Latina/x to describe my participants.



***Student and Family Interviews.*** A narrative inquiry approach may employ a number of various methods (e.g., surveys, observations, interviews, and documents) to obtain data (Riessman, 1993; Squire, 2008). This study was developed through the use of interviews as the primary method for data collection. I utilized an in-depth phenomenological technique for interviewing to better understand the subjective experiences of participants and the meaning they ascribed to these experiences (Seidman, 2013). A semi-structured approach is most useful for interviews centered on experience (Squire, 2008) and offered me the flexibility of a less rigid interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) with the ability to follow up with probing questions to gain a deeper understanding of participants' narratives. The interview process reflected an abridged version of Seidman's (2013) three-part interview series (life history, details of experience, and meaning making) with interviews occurring at two separate time points throughout Spring/Summer 2019 and Winter/Spring 2020. The first interview began with a focused life history to provide context for their current experiences (e.g., Can you tell me about where you grew up and a little bit about your family?; Growing up, to what extent did members of your family encourage education?), followed by details of experience to understand their current experiences related to the study's topic (e.g., How do you navigate being a college student and maintaining a relationship with your family?; In what ways do you feel that your family supports you while you are in college?), and concluded with a reflection on meaning to understand how participants made meaning of their experiences (e.g., Who or what has been the most influential in helping you get to where you're at today?; What advice would you provide to a future Latina about to enter college?). This meaning making part was especially important for me to be able to draw directly from participants' experiential knowledge. Each interview with students ranged from 60 to 90 minutes and mostly took place on campus either in my office or in

a study room booked through the library. Interviews with family members ranged from 45 to 120 minutes and mostly took place in their homes, though one parent did prefer that our interview take place over the phone. Furthermore, phone interviews took place for those family members who were located more than an hour away from WCU. Students were interviewed twice while family members were interviewed once. Splitting up the interviews for students allowed me to check in with participants during the second interview about questions that remained from their first interview. Interviews were conducted in the language of preference of each participant, with all student interviews conducted in English (with Spanish mixed in between) and family member interviews conducted in English (siblings) or Spanish (parents). All 27 interviews were audio recorded and personally transcribed.

### **Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis involves a meaning making process that requires implementing a strategy to reduce and interpret data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Informed by a narrative inquiry methodology in which the researcher is concerned with content, I employed a thematic analysis of the data (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis necessarily involves “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” that relate back to the study’s research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). Thus, I was interested in identifying patterns by which Latina/x college students discussed experiences related to the role of their family in shaping their educational trajectory. I was also interested in how family members discussed their own beliefs about their role in influencing the educational trajectories of students. As such, a thematic analysis was used as opposed to necessarily (re)presenting participants’ stories (Riessman, 2008). Though Chapter 5 is organized by four broad themes, at times I do offer extended examples of participants’ narratives. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, counterstories

allow one to challenge narratives about communities of color. Wanting to center the positive role of family throughout the educational trajectories of students, I framed each theme by first acknowledging themes of counterstories that were reflected in participants' experiences. This study is guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step-by-step phases of thematic analysis: 1) familiarizing yourself with your data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report.

### **Familiarizing Yourself with the Data**

As suggested by Seidman (2013), interviews were audio recorded allowing me to have a better understanding of my participants and make deeper sense of the data. Data immersion is crucial in this phase and to do so involves repeatedly reading through the transcribed data, taking notes, and creating possible ideas for codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommend engaging early on with a single transcript through an open coding process and writing down notes, comments, and questions along the margins of the data similar to Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach above. I engaged in an ongoing process of writing down notes and analytical memos to document changes in my protocol and took note of possible relationships and categories from the data (Maxwell, 2013). Upon completing an initial scan of the transcripts, I made note of preliminary findings.

### **Generating Initial Codes**

Building off of the first phase, this phase involved assigning codes to the data. I used MAXQDA coding software to help assign and retrieve codes across datasets. The coding process began with conducting multiple rounds of first cycle coding across a couple of datasets to identify codes. These codes were then matched on to my remaining datasets with new codes added as necessary. In the first pass of data, I used open coding to see what was being reflected

in the data. My second pass of data was devoted to coding instances that related to my three theoretical frameworks. Codes related to LatCrit in Education included instances of gender (also included in Chicana/Latina feminism), race/ethnicity, SES, language (also linguistic capital in community cultural wealth), and citizenship. I also coded data that exemplified the various types of community cultural wealth.

### **Searching for Themes**

Upon developing an expansive list of codes, the next step involves sorting codes into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As such, upon completing multiple rounds of coding, I went through my codes and removed those that were not helpful or combined codes that should have been grouped together into larger themes. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe this process of grouping similar codes together as axial coding.

### **Reviewing Themes**

Upon further review of themes, it is important to distinguish between themes that can stand alone, should be grouped together, or exist separately (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To do this, it is important to gather all coded extracts for each theme and determine whether a coherent pattern exists in relation to one other and in relation to the entire dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this point, I should be clear about the overall story that the data is telling (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Defining and Naming Themes**

This step involves defining and further refining themes and capturing the extent to which sub-themes may be necessary to further structure a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Following the initial rounds of coding, I engaged in a second cycle coding strategy that allowed me to examine all of my child codes (created from the first two rounds of

coding) and further group them into larger parent codes in order to begin formulating larger categories (Saldaña, 2016).

### **Producing the Report**

The last step involves writing up the themes by choosing sufficient data extracts that truly elucidate each theme, providing a description of the data extracts, and providing an argument of the extract that relates back to my research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This last step is illustrated in my Chapter 5.

### **Ensuring Trustworthiness**

One method for establishing credibility is engaging in triangulation or engaging in a constant comparative process across various data sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For my study, this method of triangulation involved two in-depth interviews with students and one interview with a family member. Another strategy for ensuring credibility is conducting member checks/respondent validation, thus, at the start of each second interview, I relayed questions that still remained from the first interview. As suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), I kept a research journal to document my own reflections, ideas, decisions, and questions related to the data collection and analysis portion of my study. All in all, these measures helped me to ensure a greater understanding of the data.

### **Positionality**

One critical component of any study is examining the insider/outsider role of the researcher. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note that a researcher's identities (e.g., class, gender, and race/ethnicity), particularly as they relate to a study, may play a role in shaping the research process. For example, if a researcher's own identities reflect that of the participants, the

researcher may find a more natural progression in gaining access and establishing trust with participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In using a narrative inquiry methodology and drawing upon a Chicana feminist epistemology (outlined in Chapter 2), it is important for me to share my own “narrative of experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) or lived experiences that I bring with me to this work. I also recognize that these experiences have the potential to allow me to have tremendous insight and/or potentially be a source of challenge. For example, there are a number of experiences that I have had growing up as a Latina in the U.S. that may be similar to the experiences of participants in my study. In those instances, these shared experiences may allow for a deeper connection with participants and greater understanding throughout the analytical process. However, it is important that I also remain cognizant that the women in my study come from a variety of backgrounds and that just because we share a cultural background and/or gender identity does not mean that my experiences will be their experiences.

According to Zitlali Morales and Monzó (2014), “as researchers, we enter our work with our own particular values, biases, and interests” (p. 1). Furthermore, they argue that these beliefs very much impact our research questions, methodology, and interpretations of findings. As a Latina scholar, it has always been my goal to advance research about communities of color, particularly as it relates to Latinas. Growing up and even into adulthood, I have always been aware of the negative stereotypes that surround the Latinx community. Although my mother did not attend college, she always passed along messages about the importance of education and that a college degree would allow me to be independent and self-sufficient. As a single mother, my mom could not provide financial assistance for me to attend a university and encouraged me to apply to scholarships that she had found through her internet searches. Because of this work, I applied and received a prestigious scholarship that paid in full my undergraduate degree at the

school of my choice. As the oldest of three sisters, I carried my own self-imposed weight of helping my younger sisters with their homework and trying to set a good example for them to also aspire to go to college. As a first-generation student who has successfully obtained a bachelor's and master's degree, the support from my family has always been an instrumental force in my persistence through the educational pipeline. Drawing from these experiences, I am compelled to document the role that family has played for other Latinas navigating institutions of higher education.

### **Limitations**

Though I had originally intended on interviewing more than one family member, the recruitment process proved to be more difficult than originally anticipated and I was only able to interview one family member for each student. Furthermore, I was unable to complete the original 30 interviews (10 students x 2 interviews + 10 family members x 1 interview) that I intended on conducting. Due to students' busy schedules, some of them had big time gaps between their first and second interviews. Furthermore, scheduling conflicts for the last two students placed me at the start of the covid-19 pandemic and did not allow me to complete the three interviews that still remained (a second interview with a student and two interviews with family members). As I recruited participants, it became clear that many of them were compelled to participate in the study because they described the importance of family in their lives. Though this fact remained, students' narratives reflected that the strong relationships they currently had with their family were not always the case. In fact, many of them described difficult relationships with their families when they were growing up. As such, I felt I was still able to offer a diverse range of familial relationships.

## Chapter 4: Participant Profiles

### Description of Participants

In this chapter, I detail the profiles of 10 Latina/x first-generation students and 8 of their family members. As a reminder, I only interviewed 8 family members as the Covid-19 pandemic prevented me from completing interviews with Theresa’s mom and Lorena’s sister. I begin with two tables summarizing demographic information for students and their family members and then go on to provide a written summary about it. Next, I provide detailed narrative profiles for every participant in the study and organize these profiles via student-family pairs. Within each profile, I include background information about students’ and family members’ country/place of origin and a brief summary of their education, labor, and migration histories. I also provide further context into students’ major, year in college, co-curricular involvement, and aspirations for their future.

***Table 1: Student Demographics***

Name	Country of Origin	Major	Community College (Y/N)	Oldest sibling (Y/N/NA)	Family Member Interviewed
Elena	United States	Economics	N	Y	Mother
Anahi	United States	Chicanx Studies & Spanish	N	NA	Mother
Karen	Guatemala	Gender Studies & Chicanx Studies	Y	Y	Mother
Diana	United States	Geography/Environmental Studies	N	N	Mother
Reyna	Mexico	Chicanx Studies	Y	N	Father
Cynthia	United States	Psychology	N	N	Sister
Nayeli	United States	Sociology	Y	N	Sister
Rosa	Mexico	Chicanx Studies	Y	N	Sister
Theresa	United States	Sociology	Y	NA	None
Lorena	United States	Education	N	N	None



As you can see in the first table, six students were born in the U.S. while three students were born in Mexico and one student in Guatemala. Though I was hoping for more ethnic representation within my sample, I was pleased with the fact that four students were first-generation immigrants who were born outside of the U.S. The reason for this being that much of the research surrounding Latino students involve those born in the U.S. Furthermore, within participant narratives I highlight that some students came from diverse racial/ethnic identities (i.e., Honduras/El Salvador, Iran, and the Philippines). Students' majors were all concentrated within the social sciences with the highest number of students majoring in Chicana Studies. For students majoring in Chicana Studies, Sociology, Gender Studies, and Education, it became clear that these classes were the catalyst to exposing them to new knowledge, which then led them to initiate conversations with family members about issues related to race/ethnicity and gender (see Chapter 5). Half of the students had previously enrolled full time at community colleges while the other half enrolled and remained at WCU directly from high school. Most students were either the youngest or middle child of their family. Of the eight family members interviewed, four were mothers, one was a father, and three were older sisters. Though I would have liked to interview more fathers, it was clear that most students believed their mothers or siblings would be able to speak more to students' experiences. Most students also described their mothers as being there with them through it all, so I was not surprised by the number of mothers I interviewed for the study. It also came as no surprise that my interview with the lone father of the group was also my quickest interview due to his short responses and his acknowledgement that his ex-wife (Reina's mother) had been the one who was more present with Reina and her sister.

***Table 2: Family Demographics***

Name	Relation to Student	Country of Origin	Education Level	Current Occupation
Señora Rodriguez	Elena's mother	Mexico	Middle school	Stay at home mother
Señora Montellano	Anahi's mother	Mexico	Middle school	Adult caretaker
Señora Garcia	Karen's mother	Guatemala	Elementary school	Housecleaner
Señora Fernandez	Diana's mother	Mexico	Elementary school	Nanny
Señor Hernandez	Reyna's father	Mexico	Middle school	Maintenance
Sara	Cynthia's sister	United States	Bachelor's degree/Some graduate school	Budgeting/Cost Estimate
Victoria	Nayeli's sister	United States	Currently enrolled in community college	Paralegal
Esmeralda	Rosa's sister	Mexico	Bachelor's degree	Data/Researcher

The majority of family participants were born in Mexico. Most parents received between an elementary and middle school education in their countries of origin. As such, many parents were limited in the types of jobs they had access to as detailed in the table above. All three sisters who were interviewed had either obtained a bachelor's degree or were currently enrolled in an institution of higher education. I now turn to participants' narrative profiles.

### **Elena**

Elena was born in Southern California and recalled moving to different areas after her family experienced several evictions. She grew up with her mother, father<sup>7</sup>, and five younger siblings. She recalled that her mother received seven or eight years of formal education while her father received nine years. Due to the sexual violence her mother experienced at a young age as

---

<sup>7</sup> Though her father is actually her stepfather, I use the word father here to remain consistent with Elena's use of father throughout her narratives.

well as the fact that she came from a family of 16 children, Elena's mother dropped out of school and worked as a street vendor to help support her family. Her father grew up with seven siblings and similarly left school to do farm work with his father. Elena's father has worked as a janitor, gardener, and caretaker throughout much of her life. Elena's mother cleaned houses while Elena was growing up and stopped shortly after the birth of one of her younger siblings. She recalled that her mother left Mexico at the age of 17 or 18 when she was one month pregnant with Elena, but could not recall when her father immigrated to the U.S. At the time of our first interview, she was well into her fourth and last year at WCU. By the time of our second interview she had participated in commencement. She has since graduated with a major in Economics and minor in Education. From our correspondence, I have learned that Elena was accepted into a fellowship program, which allowed her to take some units of graduate school and intern with an office in the California state government. During this program, she also applied to master's and PhD programs in economics and education and has since informed me that she was accepted into her top choice, a master's program at Teacher's College. Elena shared her aspirations of becoming a leader and "impacting society in different ways." She chose her mother for me to interview as she cited that her mother has always been with her and seen her grow over the years. She was much closer to her mother than her father and mentioned that she believed her mother would have more to say in an interview. Elena believed that it was important for her mother to have an opportunity to reflect back on Elena's life and her role in it.

### **Señora Rodriguez, Elena's mother**

Señora Rodriguez was born in Jalisco, Mexico and grew up with her mother, father, and 15 siblings. She grew up poor and was only able to receive eight years of formal education in Mexico before having to take care of her youngest siblings while her mother left Mexico to work

in the U.S. She recalled having very supportive teachers who wished that she could remain in school. Señora Rodriguez aspired to work for the federal judicial police, but these dreams were cut short when her mom left to the U.S. She reflected back to me that this time period affected her a lot and she felt as though her mom prevented her from being able to get ahead in life. Though Señora Rodriguez's mother eventually returned, she decided to immigrate to the U.S. at the age of 17. Experiencing poverty within her home and her community, she wished for something more. Additionally, there were incidents of domestic violence and alcoholism on the part of her father, which further cemented her decision to embark on a new path. She left Mexico resolved to financially help her mother so that she would not have to work so hard. At that time, she had been pregnant and remembered praying to la Virgen de Guadalupe [Our Lady of Guadalupe] that she not miscarry on her journey. She admitted that her pregnancy was one of the reasons why she left Mexico for the "land of opportunities." Furthermore, she wanted a better future for Elena than the one she personally experienced in Mexico and wanted her to not face any obstacles. This hope for a better future for Elena necessarily involved education. Before her journey crossing over into the U.S., her mother gave her some shots which she believed would maintain the pregnancy. Señora Rodriguez recalled all of the prayers she mustered to protect her and her baby as she jumped over a fence. She attributed her continued pregnancy to her faith in God and la Virgen de Guadalupe [Our Lady of Guadalupe]. Upon arriving to the U.S., she spent a year working for a garment business. Currently, she is a stay at home mother of six children. Her hope for Elena was that she be someone in this life and she believed Elena could accomplish anything she set her mind to. Her only request of Elena was that she be a good person and do good in whatever role she performed.

**Anahi**

Anahi grew up in a city in Southern California with her mother and father. Though she was not certain about her parents' education levels, she believed that they did not receive more than an elementary school education. Her parents came from big families with 8-10 siblings and school for them provided an opportunity to be fed and taken care of. Since Anahi's grandfather (mother's father) passed away when her mother was young, her mother helped Anahi's grandmother (mother's mother) by taking tortillas to customers and picking up clothing to be ironed. Anahi's father immigrated to the U.S. when he was in his 20s and worked in construction and additional jobs here and there. Her mother, on the other hand, came into the U.S. twice. The first time occurred when her mother was in her 20s and worked in Washington with Anahi's tía [aunt] in the orchards. When her mother returned to Mexico, she successfully sold chickens to financially support her mother. Her mother returned to the U.S. for a second and final time sometime after. At the time of the study, her father had been working as a certified nurse assistant at a nursing home for more than 20 years and her mother had been taking care of two older adults for the last couple of years. Previously, Anahi's mother worked at the elementary school where Anahi attended and was in charge of taking care of the playground and watching over the students during lunch. At the time of the study, Anahi was in her third year at WCU where she double majored in Chicana Studies and Spanish and minored in Education. She was involved in the McNair Scholars program where she was able to develop her own research project and worked as a peer counselor through MEChA. Though she mentioned being unsure about whether she would work for some time before applying to graduate school, she was certain about wanting to work in higher education to provide academic advising in the community college or CSU system. Seeing her family members and other peers struggle to navigate through college, Anahi realized her passion for helping other first generation and students of color like

her. When she was deciding who to have me interview, she commented that she did not think her father would agree to be interviewed and also assumed he would not have much to say. She decided that I should interview her mother because she believed her mother would have a lot to say given that she had been present for all of her educational struggles.

### **Señora Montellano, Anahi's mother**

Señora Montellano was born in Jalisco, Mexico and grew up with her mother, father, and nine siblings. She did not receive more than a middle school education and described herself as not having a knack for school. Regardless, her family did not have the financial means to support her and her siblings to go to school. She began working from the early age of 10/11 to contribute financially to the family. At this age, she and her siblings would get groceries for their neighbors, and as they got older, they started cleaning houses. She first immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 20 where she settled in Washington with her sister. She eventually returned to Mexico and did not return to the U.S. until after she was married. Señora Montellano worked at Anahi's school for eight years to be closer to Anahi. At the time of our interview, she had been taking care of two older adults for the past year and a half. When I asked Señora Montellano what she wanted for Anahi's future, she said that she wanted to see her working and finishing up with school. She hoped to see her settled in life and hoped she would be married but admitted that she would support Anahi in whatever she decided to do.

### **Karen**

Karen was born and raised in a rural part of Guatemala and primarily lived with her mother, sister, and grandparents on a farm. She mentioned that her mother did not finish elementary and that her father received a little bit of high school instruction but was unable to complete because his father had passed away and he needed to work to support his mother and

nine other siblings. Karen shared that her mother was a housewife and her father owned a business when they lived in Guatemala. She recalled that gangs wanted to interfere with her father's business, which prompted them to flee from that violence. At the time of our first interview, she had been living in the U.S. for almost 10 years. Once in the U.S., her father worked for a company in charge of unloading merchandise and her mom cleaned houses from time to time when they needed the money. After graduating from high school, Karen attended community college for three years before transferring to WCU where she continued to commute from home. While at WCU, she double majored in Gender Studies and Chicana Studies. She described being involved in Hermanas Unidas and Lambda Theta Alpha, two organizations that served to empower Latinas. Additionally, she was part of a community service project that provided tutoring and mentoring to K-12 students and served as a chair of a mentorship program that paired undergraduate students with graduate students to learn more about the process of graduate school. When I asked Karen about her plans after WCU, she described wanting to take a gap year before applying to master's programs in Public Health or Education Counseling. Part of her reasoning was that she felt she did not learn about graduate school until very late and would not have been able to submit materials by the program deadlines. Reflecting on her own college knowledge, she expressed a desire to pass along knowledge about college to other Latinas. By the time of our second interview, Karen had just graduated from WCU.

### **Señora Garcia, Karen's mother**

Señora Garcia was born in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala where she lived with her mother, father, and three brothers. She grew up in the outskirts of town in a small village with no more than eight houses. She received five years of formal education, while two of her brothers only received two years of formal education before their father made them start working. Her third

brother was a person with disabilities and, as such, there was no school program for him to attend. Señora Garcia recalled only going to school up to the fifth grade as a result of needing to take care of her brother as well as her father's beliefs that the role of women was to get married and raise children. Her father also believed that when young women were in school it was inevitable that they would get pregnant. Though she never worked outside of the home, she did help her parents to plant wheat, corn, and potatoes. Once she married her husband, she moved in with him and her mother-in-law as she explained that back then it was a woman's duty to take care of the home and serve her husband. At the time of the interview, it had been 10 years since Señora Garcia had immigrated to the U.S. When I asked why she and her husband decided to come to the U.S., she responded that Karen was in middle school at the time and they thought that she would have better opportunities if they left Guatemala. This move was made easier due to the fact that Señora Garcia's sisters-in-law had their citizenship and had been working on securing papers for her husband. Since arriving to the U.S., she has worked on and off cleaning houses. Her aspirations for Karen were for her to continue with her studies and receive her master's degree and for her to work and make her own money so she could afford things in life (e.g., a car and traveling). Though she pictured Karen in an office dressed as a secretary or a doctor, she made it clear that she would support Karen in whatever she decided to study and work in.

**Diana**



Diana grew up in a city in Southern California and moved around this area as a result of gentrification. Their<sup>8</sup> mother and father grew up in Mexico in Mexico City and Queretaro respectively. Because Diana's grandfather believed women who went to school left pregnant, Diana's mother did not receive more than an elementary school education. Diana was unsure about their father's education level, but assumed it was similar to their mother. While their older sister had attended a UC institution in Northern California, she failed out and returned home and enrolled in a community college. Around the time of the interview, their sister was set to transfer to a CSU not far from home. Additionally, their brother was set to start at a UC institution located not too far from home. Their father worked in construction and their mother worked as a nanny. At the time of the interview, Diana was going into their fourth year with a major in Geography/Environmental Studies. At WCU, they were part of a Chicana/Latina sorority Phi Lambda Rho and worked in the payroll office. Diana shared their aspirations of applying to graduate school for Urban Planning but wanted to take some time off in between as they described feeling drained from college. Though initially Diana had hoped I could interview both parents, it ended up being most convenient for me to interview their mother.

**Señora Fernandez, Diana's mother**

Señora Fernandez was born in Mexico City, Mexico where she lived with her mother, father, and 11 siblings. She described growing up poor and in a house made out of cardboard. She recalled only receiving formal education through the equivalent of elementary school, while

---

<sup>8</sup> Diana was the one student in my study who identified as nonbinary. When I asked about pronouns, Diana commented that she/her pronouns were fine to use as those were the pronouns most people used to refer to them. Upon further probing, Diana revealed that it would mean a lot if I used they/them pronouns when referring to them throughout the study. As such, I utilize they/them pronouns when referring to Diana.

her brothers completed the equivalent of high school. Though she once had aspirations to be a nurse and at one point attended a beauty school, she and her siblings were unable to continue with school due to a sister's kidney failure. At the age of 26, Señora Fernandez left Mexico with two of her brothers after promising her mother that she would save up money to finish their house in Mexico. The three of them stayed in Southern California where she worked at a cassette factory for three months and then worked at a cleaners for about six months before accepting a full time babysitting job from one of her client's at the cleaners. She babysat for two years until her brothers decided that they would all return to Mexico. At that time, she had just began dating one of her male friends who was so smitten with her that he offered to bring her back to the U.S. Because Señora Fernandez had not acquired enough money to renovate the house and her mother recognized that she was old enough to make her own decisions, she gave her blessing for her to return to the U.S. Given that she had heard many horror stories of women experiencing sexual and physical violence when crossing the border, she and her boyfriend acted as if they were married and said she was pregnant in the hopes that no one would touch her. At the time of the interview, she was working as a nanny for about four hours a day. When I asked what she wanted for Diana's future, she stated that she wanted to see Diana in a place where they could help out their community. She mentioned that perhaps one day she would see Diana advocating for human rights alongside activists and that she would fully support Diana if they chose to do that.

### **Reyna**

Reyna was born in Mexico City and was raised in Cuernavaca, Mexico where she lived with her mother, father, and two sisters. She described how her father began working at the young age of five shining shoes and selling food on the street. Though her father did not stay in

school past middle school, her mother was able to graduate from high school. By the time her mother graduated from high school she had already had her first child, Reyna's older sister. Deciding to see what the U.S. had to offer, Reyna's father left Mexico to work with his aunt in agriculture. This coincided with one of the immigration reform bills that granted him eligibility to obtain amnesty. Because he was able to secure a letter for Reyna's mother, both parents spent time working in the U.S. and going back home to Mexico. Her parents eventually brought her older sister with them to the U.S. using someone else's papers, but they all returned back to Mexico when her sister became sick. Reyna's sister was diagnosed with leukemia presumably from the pesticides that were used in the fields where Reyna's mother and father worked. Because her sister was receiving treatment in Mexico, she missed her immigration appointment and was unable to secure her papers. To this day, her older sister has remained living in Mexico. Reyna's parents continued to work in the U.S. and travel back to Mexico. After struggling to bear children for the next three years, Reyna's mother was eventually able to become pregnant with Reyna which prompted the move back to Mexico. During that time, her father worked as a soccer referee and later managed an indoor soccer field. Her mother worked as an assistant in an office and later became a salesperson. Reyna's parents would eventually separate and return to the U.S. They eventually reconciled and lived in the U.S. while Reyna's grandparents took care of her and her sisters. Her parents eventually secured papers for Reyna and her youngest sister which allowed them to cross the border. Her and her sister remained in the U.S. for three years before having to leave back to Mexico while their documents were being fixed. They remained there for two years before moving back to the U.S. for the last time. During her senior year, Reyna had been accepted into a local CSU, but did not realize that her offer was contingent on her re-taking an English course that she had previously not passed. She was unaware of this

stipulation and was confused and disappointed when she learned that her offer had been rescinded. She enrolled in a local community college where she remained for the next three and a half years. This time period in her life proved difficult as her parents eventually separated once more and filed for divorce. However, she coped by throwing herself into school and was actively involved in a new organization that had been created to better equip students with resources to assist with the transfer process. Reyna transferred to WCU where she majored in Chicana Studies and minored in Education. At the time of her first interview, Reyna had just graduated from WCU and expressed wanting to take one or two gap years so that she could work and save money to enroll in a professional program. During her first interview, she spoke about being interested in master's or PhD programs related to counseling, social welfare, social work, education, or student affairs. By her second interview, she had narrowed her options to a master's program in educational counseling or marriage/family therapy. Reflecting on her own experience with mental health professionals, she expressed a desire to serve as a Latina therapist and provide therapy to other Latinx community members. Though she was open to me interviewing any of her family members, I ultimately interviewed her father as he was the only one available for the interview. Reyna expressed that she wanted to see how much he has learned over the years, especially since they did not share a lot with one another.

### **Señor Hernandez, Reyna's father**

Señor Hernandez was born in Matamoros in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. He and his older brother were raised by his grandfather who was the pastor of a church. He grew up living in many places, which meant that he was always attending new schools. He attributed his moving around as one of the reasons why he did not stay in school past middle school. While in Mexico, he was a soccer trainer and retired from that. He recalled being intrigued by stories of

the opportunities available in the U.S. and decided to immigrate to the U.S. at the age of 22/23. Because he had family in the U.S., he worked with his tío [uncle] helping him to plant strawberries and work the tractor. At the time of the interview, he worked for a company that did building maintenance. Señor Hernandez shared that he would like to see Reyna reach her full potential in this country and have one of the highest careers. Though he would have liked to see Reyna study medicine and believed she had the capacity to do so, he conceded that her career has to be something she is personally interested in.

### **Cynthia**

Cynthia grew up in Southern California and lived with her mother and father. She had two older sisters, both of whom were more than 20 years older than her. Growing up, Cynthia was surrounded by a large extended family. Her mother was born in Tijuana and her father was born in Jalisco. With regard to education, her mother and sisters graduated from high school in the U.S. while her father received no more than a second-grade education in Mexico. Additionally, one of her sisters eventually graduated from a four-year university while her other sister enrolled in cosmetology school. Cynthia recalled that her grandfather would cross the border daily to work in the U.S. and eventually secured a sponsor to bring the family over. At the time, Cynthia's mother was around 14 years of age. At the age of 16, her mother began working as a secretary in an office and, with the help of a mentor, she was able to secure a job at AT&T where she worked for 30 years before eventually retiring. Cynthia's father immigrated to the U.S. around 17/18 years of age and crossed the border with a cousin. Once he arrived, her father worked as a waiter for 20 years before securing work as a groundskeeper at a naval base. At the time of the study, Cynthia was in her third year at WCU majoring in Psychology and minoring in Education. Though it took her a while to become involved on campus, she became very active in

a church ministry group. She shared her aspirations of going into criminal or forensic psychology and one day working for the FBI. Cynthia asked me to interview her oldest sister whom she described as a second mom who was there for her in ways her parents could not be. She described her sister as a friend and someone who would have a lot to share having been through it all with her.

### **Sara, Cynthia's older sister**

Growing up, Sara described moving around upwards of 15 times before settling down in her current neighborhood in Southern California. She recalled staying with her “nana and tata” (grandparents) while her mother went to work. During this time, her father was in and out of her life and she was raised by her mother. Sara described coming “from a big Mexican family.” Her mother eventually remarried and gave birth to Cynthia who was 23 years apart from Sara. Though she had aspirations to attend a particular university on the outskirts of Los Angeles, she acknowledged that she stayed behind because of her high school boyfriend and feeling “cultural pressures” to stay with him. Sara also mentioned that nobody had ever left home and confessed that she did not feel brave enough at the time to take that leap to leave. She began working full time and enrolled in a local community college. Taking advantage of an in-house program through her company that covered the cost of college, she eventually transferred to a four-year university and attended classes at a satellite campus near home for two years. She paused her schooling after getting married and having a son and it was not until divorcing her husband that she eventually went back to school and completed her degree. As one of the oldest children on her mother's side of the family, it was important for Sara “to be one of the first college graduates for the first generation here.” Though she had enrolled in a graduate program, it did not offer night classes which was something she needed as a single mother. As such, she was only able to

complete one semester before having to withdraw. She has remained with the same company for 24 years now and currently works in the budgeting/cost estimate department.

### **Nayeli**

Nayeli was born in a city in Southern California to a Filipino mother and Mexican father. Because her parents separated when she was eight, she primarily grew up with her mother, sister, and brother. Still, she credits her grandparents with raising her. Nayeli has a second brother through her father's second marriage. Nayeli was unsure about how many years of formal education her mother received but speculated that it was unlikely that she went to high school or even middle school given that her family back in the Philippines was very poor. On the other hand, Nayeli's father graduated from a high school in the U.S. and enlisted in the Navy where he made airplanes. At the time of the study, her father worked at a lunch truck and her mother worked at a warehouse in Washington. She shared that her older sister had been working on her associate degree, meanwhile her younger brother had been working full time after deciding school was not for him. Nayeli graduated from high school and eventually became pregnant with her daughter and a stay at home mother. She soon found herself as a single mother and decided to enroll in a local community college and moved in with her grandparents. Nayeli would later transfer to WCU where she majored in sociology. At the time of our first interview, it had been Nayeli's first year at WCU. One of the challenges Nayeli expressed about being a full-time student and student parent was feeling as though she was neglecting her four-year-old daughter. She worked at the transfer center at WCU and engaged in a number of her own research projects. By the time of our second interview, she was certain about applying to graduate school for social welfare but was unsure about whether she should apply to master's or PhD programs. Part of her reasoning was that she had been a single mother for some time and was now in a place where she

was in love and ready to start a family. Similar to her decision to stay local to attend community college and WCU, Nayeli commented that she would want to stay local for graduate school so that her grandparents could continue to see her daughter. Nayeli chose her sister to be interviewed because she believed her sister understood the balance between going to college and working.

### **Victoria, Nayeli's older sister**

Victoria was born in a city in Southern California and recalled always moving from place to place with her mother and sister. She recalled her mother never pushing education and her mother's belief that she could find a man to take care of her. She remembered hating school as a teenager and finding an independent studies program that allowed her to focus on her music and band. It was not until later that Victoria found out that that she and Nayeli did not share the same biological father and that she was in fact Filipina and Vietnamese and not Filipina and Mexican like Nayeli. She later gave birth to a son and was a stay at home mother for three years before enrolling in community college. At this point, she worked as a server and bartender since they were flexible with her class schedule. At the time of the interview, she worked as a paralegal at a firm and aspired to be an attorney in intellectual property law. She and her son lived with Nayeli and her daughter in family housing. Victoria has been attending community college for the past three years to secure her associate degree and plans on transferring to a four-year university and eventually apply to law school. She shared that she wanted to see Nayeli "achieve her goals and be her own boss."

### **Rosa**

Rosa was born in Sinaloa, Mexico where she grew up with her mother, father, and two older sisters. She was unsure how many years of formal education her parents received but



believed that both had less than a first-grade education as they had grown up poor and could not afford school. Rosa's grandfather was a worker in the Bracero program, and she recalled that her father grew up working in the fields at a young age. Her father first settled in the Central Valley where he worked in various orchards and continued to make his way north until settling down in the rural community that Rosa would eventually move to. It was there where he found work for a winery owner who provided a letter of recommendation for residency which prompted the entire family to arrive in Northern California in 2000. Rosa's mother worked with her father in the fields for a brief period of time before working as a housekeeper for a hotel, and eventually deciding to be a stay at home mother. Her father would eventually switch jobs to become a firework technician. Her two older sisters enrolled in community college and transferred to different UC's in the surrounding area. After graduating from college, Rosa's oldest sister found a job working with research and data in a mental health organization while her other sister found work as a financial analyst at a bank. After graduating from high school, Rosa followed in her sisters' footsteps and enrolled in community college. She later transferred to WCU and majored in Chicana Studies and minored in Education. Rosa was involved in a campus program that allowed students at the system-wide level to lobby to the administration about important issues affecting students. Additionally, she volunteered for events put on by MEChA. At the time of the interview, she was in her last year at WCU and was set to graduate in spring 2020. She shared that after graduation she hoped to work for one year before applying to graduate programs. Her plan was to apply to an internship that would allow her to work in an Education department and take public policy classes at a UC institution in Northern California. Her dream career was to be an educator with her dream job being that of a counselor at a community college to work with transfer students. Reflecting back on her own positive experiences with several community

college counselors, she wanted to provide the same kind of support to other students. Rosa chose her oldest sister to be interviewed because she paved the path as the first one to go off to college and respected her older sister and believed she would be the best person to give the best answers because she knew everybody so well.

### **Esmeralda, Rosa's older sister**

Esmeralda grew up in Sinaloa, Mexico where she lived with her mother and the rest of her family until the age of 11. At that point, her father, who had been working in the U.S., had been able to secure green cards for the rest of the family. She remembered that her father did not want to bring them all without proper papers. They settled in a small, rural community in Northern California where her dad worked as a field worker. After graduating from high school, Esmeralda enrolled in a local community college and participated in their Puente program, a program created with the goal of increasing the number of Latino students transferring to four-year institutions. She was there for four years as she remembered taking her time to figure out what she wanted to do. Esmeralda eventually transferred to a UC institution in Northern California where she remained for three years. At the time of the interview, she worked at a mental health agency working with data and research. She shared that she wanted Rosa to “successfully build a career for herself” and “focus in her personal life after graduating.” She also wanted Rosa to be able to attend her dream graduate school.

### **Theresa**

Theresa grew up in a city in Southern California that was predominantly working class and Latino. Her mother was born in Honduras but was raised in El Salvador, which is where many of her family's customs derive from. Though her mother did not finish high school, she did manage to find a job working as a secretary in El Salvador. While her father is Iranian, she did

not have any close ties to that part of her heritage since he was not involved in her life. Her mother immigrated to the U.S. in the 80s which then opened the door for the rest of her siblings to join her. Though her mother raised her as a single mother, the two of them lived with her mother's sister, brother, and nephew. Her mother and aunt worked as housekeepers while her uncle assembled furniture. After graduating from high school, Theresa attended a UC institution, but left after a difficult first quarter. She moved back home and enrolled in a community college and was there for five years. She described this time as unfocused with about 15 withdrawals on her record. She transferred to a different community college where she remained for two years. There, Theresa turned her grades around and transferred to WCU, which had been her dream school since she was a young girl. While at WCU, Theresa was part of an organization that paired up students with staff members working in maintenance, food service, and custodial units on campus to provide tutoring in English. Part of the reason she volunteered with this organization was because she always reflected on how her mother came to the U.S. from a country in which she did not speak English. From her perspective, she was paying it forward and "holding a door open for others." During our first interview, Theresa was finishing up her second year as a Sociology major and was set to graduate in Spring 2020. After graduation, she secured a one-year teaching position in Japan. Theresa ultimately aspired to go to graduate school and become a Central American scholar.

### **Lorena**

Lorena was born in Southern California and lived with her mother, father, and older sister. Both her parents were born in Mexico, with her mother born in Michoacán and father born in Jalisco. Though she was not certain, she believed her mother was able to finish elementary while her father did not make it past second or third grade. Meanwhile, Lorena's older sister

graduated from WCU. Her mother immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 16 to live with her sister and take care of her children. When I asked about her father's migration history, she could not recall when or why he immigrated to the U.S. Before her and her sister were born, her parents worked at a factory that manufactured license plates. Her mother worked there until she gave birth to Lorena's sister. At the age of six or seven, Lorena's parents were deported, and she and her sister were taken in by their aunt. Her parents were able to come back into the country three months later, but they had to move because it was no longer safe to stay there, nor did they have enough money for rent. They were able to stay with Lorena's uncle who fixed up his garage. They remained there for eight or nine years until they were all able to move into a one-bedroom apartment. For the past 10-11 years, her mother has worked in housecleaning and her father has worked in landscaping. At the time of the study, Lorena was in her first year at WCU and was working on becoming an Education major and was involved in a folklórico group on campus. Having volunteered at elementary schools during high school, Lorena shared with me her aspirations to become a teacher.

## **CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS**

In this chapter, I present my findings through a thematic analysis of the narratives of 10 Latina/x first-generation students and 8 of their family members across four broad themes: (1) The Transmission of Education across Generations; (2) K-12 Support and Involvement; (3) College Search and Decision-Making Process; and (4) College Support and Involvement. The first theme is tied to my first research question: What messages do Latina/x college students receive from their family about education and pursuing a college degree? How have these messages shaped their educational trajectories? Themes two through four help to answer my second research question: What is the role of family within Latina/x students' educational trajectories? As I stated in Chapter 3, the use of counterstories provides an analytical framework for me to present these findings. I purposefully organize my findings by beginning with counterstories and anti-deficit accounts of how families and student engage with one another. I then highlight the tensions, challenges, and contradictions found within participant narratives to further nuance and contextualize the lived experiences of participants. By engaging in this intentional process, my goal is to portray the authentic and complex narratives of participants.

### **The Transmission of Education across Generations**

The first theme I present in this chapter involves the messages about education and college that parents and family members transmitted to students. The four subthemes in this section include: (1) Education and Educación: Parents' Education Histories; (2) Parental Messages about Education Transmitted to Students; (3) Parental Messages about College Transmitted to Students; and (4) Familial Messages about Education and College Transmitted to Students.

#### **Education and Educación: Parents' Education Histories**

Before discussing the messages about education and college that were passed down to students from parents and other family members, I think it is important to first discuss the messages that parents received about education when they were children. In order to better understand the past and present, one must look further back across previous generations as this allows for a more complete picture of the transformation or preservation of beliefs and attitudes over time. Furthermore, understanding the context in which parents grew up offers possible explanations as to why parents chose to transmit the messages that they did to students.

**Counterstory: La educación es muy importante [Education is very important]**

Growing up in Mexico and Guatemala, four out of the five parents recalled childhoods filled with messages about the importance of una educación or education. For them, receiving una educación meant both what they learned in the classroom and the values and principles that were instilled in the home. Señora Rodriguez reflected, "...mi madre siempre decía que teníamos que estudiar. Teníamos que ser alguien. Que no teníamos que quedarnos así nomas. Que la educación era muy importante. Que no quería que estuviera....como yo lavando menudo." [My mother always told us that we had to study. We had to be someone. That we didn't have to stay like this. That education was very important. That she didn't want me to have to wash menudo like her]. Other parents recalled receiving similar messages from their mothers about how important it was for them to study and that an education would help them be someone someday. Raised primarily by his grandfather who was a pastor, Señor Hernandez recalled, "Mira mensajes sobre la educación pues si enseñanzas buenas. Prácticamente pues dentro de todo eso iba junta la religión y los principios que nos dieron....como comportarse, como actuar, como tratar a la gente. Si como interactuar. Todo eso." [Look messages about education well yes there were good teachings. Within all of that, religion also went together with the values that they gave us...how

to behave, how to act, how to treat people. Yes, how to interact. All of that]. Several other parents echoed this piece about the importance of religion, being humble, and respecting others. It was clear from these narratives that their parents held high aspirations for them to elevate their station in life and that education would help to get them there. Importantly, this idea of educación reflected above highlights a different cultural understanding than what is traditionally thought of as education in the U.S. Whereas U.S. notions of education involve what is learned more formally in the classroom setting, Latino notions of educación necessarily involve the formal education received in school and the values/morals that parents raise children to have. I present this section as a counterstory as it highlights the positive messages parents received about education, thereby challenging dominant narratives that portray Latino parents as not valuing education.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** It should be noted that one parent, Señora Garcia, expressed never receiving any messages from her family about education. Though most parents recalled receiving positive messages about education as children, the act of going to and staying in school was challenging given that their families had minimal financial resources. Their low socioeconomic status coupled with the fact that many parents came from big families of upwards of 15 siblings, meant that they had to begin working at a young age to help their families. Señora Rodriguez recalled having to choose between going to school or having something to eat. She began working at an early age to help her family and eventually had to shift her efforts to taking care of her younger siblings when her mother immigrated to the U.S. to find work. Other parents recalled similar stories of not being able to continue going to school because their families could not afford pens, pencils, or notebooks. Consequently, parents reported having 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade education levels in their home country.

In addition to having few financial resources, some parents talked about how the role of gender played out in the messages they and their siblings received about education. Growing up in Guatemala as the only daughter in her family, Señora Garcia recalled attending school up to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, meanwhile, her two younger brothers stopped attending school after the second grade. In her father's eyes, the only skills her brothers needed to have were to know how to read and write. Even though she remained in school longer than her brothers, she eventually stopped going because her father insisted that a woman's role was to get married and raise the kids and that when women go to school, they only end up pregnant. She would later marry and move in with her husband and in-laws as she was raised to believe that "el deber de la mujer es servirle a el esposo y tender la casa" [a woman's duty is to serve her husband and take care of the house]. When asked about where her father may have developed these messages, Señora Garcia pointed to the fact that her parents did not receive an education and that her father received those same messages from his own parents. In this particular example, we see a continuation of the same narrative being transmitted from her grandparents, to her father, and then to her.

### **Parental Messages about Education Transmitted to Students**

I now turn to the messages that the parents in my study transmitted to students. For the five parents in the study, education was described as "algo importante" [something important] and "es tu futuro" [it is your future]. Messages from parents frequently embodied some of the same messages they received from their own parents when they were children as well as different messages that reflected a shift towards new understandings.

**Counterstory: Focus on your studies and we'll take care of the rest.** Students confirmed the positive messages about education detailed by the five parents in the study. A common message recalled by students was "tu único trabajo es estudiar" [your only job is to go



to school/study]. They were told by their parents that their only responsibility was going to school and being a student. As such, they did not have to worry about working, paying the bills, cooking, and cleaning. To illuminate this subtheme, I now turn to Elena and Karen.

When asked about the messages she received from her parents, Elena stated the following:

Yeah, well with my mom and my dad the messages were pretty similar. It was more you have to work, and they would tell me how they didn't have the privilege to continue their education in Mexico because they had to start working to help out with the family and they both had similar stories in that case. So, they would just tell me, Hey, go to school. You have papers. You have the privilege to continue your education. We're working hard so you can go get an education. You don't even have to cook or clean or you don't have to go work. All you have to do is do good in school and so that's the message that my parents gave me.

This process of parents' sharing their own educational experiences was common in the stories of students and parents. As was the case with all the parents in the study, Elena's parents described not being able to continue to pursue their education. As I detail in the beginning of this chapter, all of the parents in the study grew up with very few financial resources which meant having to work from a very young age to contribute to the household. Though the majority of parents in the study held at least a green card, Elena's parents are both undocumented. In the quote above, we see an emphasis on the fact that Elena is a citizen and therefore has access to opportunities that allow her to go to school and continue her education beyond high school. Later in our interview, Elena recalled receiving a similar message from her aunts and uncles about taking advantage of the fact that she had papers and could obtain an education.

In a second example, Karen, who immigrated to the U.S. from Guatemala at the age of 13 explained:

when I came to the U.S. definitely, they know that the opportunities are here, and we should take advantage of that. So, it was always that Okay, so you guys have no responsibilities whatsoever. So, definitely focus on your studies and then that they were gonna take care of the rest in regards to billing, bills, and rent and all that stuff.

Karen's mother, Señora Garcia, confirmed these messages about wanting her daughters to take advantage of the opportunities they had available to them in this country and prioritizing their education. In her interview, Señora Garcia recalled the following about going to school as a child:

...observé...mis compañeros que ellos si siguieron estudiando, pero el motivo de que los padres pues tenían la posibilidad de que ellos siguieran estudiando. Vi la diferencia en ellos y dije, No, cuando mis hijas crezcan, a ellas les voy a dar la oportunidad de que si puedan seguir estudiando y que no se queden como yo me quedé. [I observed...my classmates who were able to continue studying, but the reason for that was well, because their parents had the possibility that they could continue to study. I saw the difference in them, and I said, No, when my daughters grow up, I will give them the opportunity to continue studying and that they don't stay the way I stayed].

It is unclear what she is referring to when she says “y que no se queden como yo me quedé” [and that they don't stay the way I stayed], but based on the conversation that preceded this memory of hers, I believe she is referring to the high aspirations she had for her daughters to continue with their education and gain access to careers that were different from the physically demanding work she was forced to do. Though Señora Garcia was unable to continue her studies when she was younger, it was important for her to provide those opportunities she missed out on to her daughters.

**Counterstory: We want you to have a better life.** Related to the sub theme of “focus on your studies and we'll take care of the rest” is this larger belief of parents that by doing well in school, their children would be able to gain access to jobs that were, like in Señora Garcia's example above, less physically demanding. Common among students' narratives were parental messages such as “we don't want you guys to do the jobs that we have” and wanting them to have a better future. Inherent in these messages was the need for students to go to college and obtain a degree, which would open the door to more career options. Reyna described the following message from her father, Señor Hernandez:

...“Do you wanna work like I do? Physically, with my body or do you wanna work with your brain? He’s like because I can tell you I’m working with my body but I’m also stressed up in here so when you’re an adult and you work you don’t have to stress about your body so much as me—literally your brain you’re gonna be tired. You guys are gonna be stressed. You get some rest and that’s it. But physically it’s another thing so you don’t...want to end up like me working with my body. You wanna work with your brain.

She later revealed that hearing her parents share their own stories and lived experiences about their labor histories and why it was important for her to go to college was instrumental in motivating her to continue to push forward. Her dad’s aspirations were to see her in a career that would allow her to work with her brain as opposed to her body as he knew firsthand how difficult it was to do physically demanding work. This larger notion of parents not wanting their children to be like them was another common sentiment expressed by students. Though this sentiment illuminates the high aspirations parents have for their children to be able to achieve greater things than them, there also seems to be an element of perhaps shame or inadequacy at the work that they do. If anything, this sentiment was only expressed by parents. Students on the other hand, never expressed any negative reactions towards their parents’ jobs. In fact, they frequently described their parents as embodying what it means to be a hard worker and demonstrate persistence. Two students, Rosa and Reyna specifically mentioned seeing their fathers work hard to provide for the family. For example, Rosa recalled:

If my parents can work hard, I mean my dad doesn’t work anymore in the fields, but if dad was able to work hard in the fields, I can work hard in education and plus I’m not outside, I’m inside. I’m in a warm place. My dad is outside in the cold.

Rosa told herself that if her father could work out in the fields, sometimes even in cold conditions, that she could similarly work hard in school where conditions were nothing compared to what her father dealt with. Reyna also mentioned:

...honestly my dad was so hard working. He would be sick. He would go to work no matter what.... So, my dad you know as like any Latino dad would almost work first

because he knew that the moment he didn't go, money for the rent wouldn't be there, money for food wouldn't be there.

Reyna remembered that her father never missed work even when he was sick and expressed how her father, similar to other Latino fathers, worked hard because he understood that his family relied on his paycheck for survival. For many students, it was particularly difficult to see the toll that work took on their parents' bodies. For example, Lorena was brought to tears as she recalled:

...both of my parents are labor workers...I have to see my parents come home. They're so exhausted. They have aches and when I try to help...get them ice or heat...heating stuff, pain killers they would use those times to...give me the example that like We don't want you to end up like this. We want you to have a nice job or a career. And sometimes, when I try to work with my dad to work on his English or I'll be going through a rough time in school where I was frustrated, or I wasn't understanding stuff, or when I wanted to give up, my dad would use the example...I don't want you to end up like me and I felt really bad cause I was like It's not your fault nobody told you that you...should stay in school. And so, both of them would use those kinds of things to be like, We want you to stay in school because we want you to have a better life than what we're doing.

What struck me the most about this response were the raw emotions that Lorena felt in describing what it was like to see her parents' come home all worn down from their jobs as labor workers. In the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A), Lorena wrote that her parents worked six days a week just to be able to provide for her and her sister. In the quote above, she detailed witnessing their exhaustion and doing her best to help alleviate their bodily aches and pains. I would argue that Lorena's parents strategically and intentionally used these occasions as teaching moments to show her how difficult life can be and convey how much more they wanted for her in life. Her dad in particular would continue to pass along this same message any time she felt frustrated in school. Similar to my previous comments about Reyna in the last example, Lorena's father also expressed similar sentiments about not wanting her to end up like him.

**Counterstory: Como padre tu eres el mejor educador [As a parent you are the best educator]** Recalling the messages about educación they received as children, parents discussed passing along similar values to their children. For many parents, this meant emphasizing values such as being humble, showing respect, and having faith in God. As Señora Rodriguez put it:

...pues aquí es donde los formamos la verdad. La verdad aquí es en—tu ahogar, tu eres el mejor educador. Como padre tu eres el mejor educador. Es... fundamento. Eres la piedra. Eres la...ahora si maestra para educar a tu hijo en muchas maneras y en muchas áreas. [Well the truth is, here is where we shape them. The truth is that in—your home, you are the best educator. As a parent you are the best educator. It's...fundamental. You are the rock. You are...now the teacher that will educate your child in many ways and in many areas].

Common across conversations with parents in the study was this belief that education begins in the home. As noted above by Señora Rodriguez, parents are the best educators. Expanding on her views about education, she continued:

Para mi la educación pues es algo que te abre puertas no, que te va abriendo puertas. Que ser educado, respetuoso mas que nada también. El respeto y la educación pues va juntas. Que si no tienes esos dos fundamentos pos no sales adelante. Le digo a mi hija que la educación es primero que nada porque sin la educación, no hay nada. No se abren puertas. Le digo Si tu no estudies, no agarras una carrera le digo No se te van abrir puertas. Siempre te vas a quedar aquí. No tengo nada en contra de McDonald's. No tengo nada en contra de otros lugares le digo, pero tú le digo—ustedes siendo ciudadanas de aquí de estados unidos, ustedes pueden lograr mucho. Puedes lograr hasta que te pagan \$80 la hora con tu educación. Puedes lograrlo. Le digo Tu no tienes le digo tu no tienes derecho a quedarte como uno, tu tienes que progresar. Tienes que agarrar una educación. [For me, education is something that opens doors, that continues to open doors. To be educated, respectful more than anything as well. Respect and education go together. If you don't have those two foundations, you won't get ahead. I tell my daughter that education is first and foremost because without education you have nothing. Doors don't open for you. I tell her If you don't study, you won't get a career. Doors won't open for you. You're always going to stay here. I don't have anything against McDonald's. I tell her I don't have anything against other places, but I tell her—you all, being U.S. citizens, you all can achieve more. You can even make it to where they're paying you \$80 an hour with your education. You can achieve that. I tell her you don't have the option of staying like one, you have to progress].

For Señora Rodriguez, education and respect went hand in hand. Without these two fundamental things, one cannot get ahead in life. She recalled telling Elena that education was important

because it opened doors and was the key to obtaining a career. She firmly believed that as a U.S. citizen, Elena could achieve so much more for herself and continue to progress and make good money.

When I asked Señora Fernandez what education meant to her, she described similar sentiments as Señora Rodriguez and stated the following:

Para mi la educación pienso que es muy importante. La primera educación que encuentra uno es en la casa yo siempre dicho porque mis padres me lo inculcaron y ya después la educación viene...viene estando en la escuela. Claro que en la escuela estudias, pero es una educación académico. Pero la educación la tienes ya de tu casa le digo a [Diana] y ya la combinas porque en la escuela te van a enseñar la educación de las materias, pero en tu casa es otra. La combina si sabe respetar a los maestros y a tus compañeros de escuela y lo mismo en la casa ya vas al escuela y ya en el escuela traes lo que aprendes verdad? Y para mi es dos diferentes educaciones, pero basada de lo mismo. [For me, I think education is very important. I've always said that the first education one receives is in the house because that's what my parents instilled in me and then later comes education....from being in school. Of course, in school you study, but it's more of an academic education. But I tell [Diana] you already have education from your home and then you combine it because in school they are going to give you an education about subjects, but in your house it's something else. You combine it if you know how to respect teachers and classmates and the same with the home, you go to school and bring what you've been taught, right? And for me there are two different types of education but based in the same thing].

In the excerpt above, Señora Fernandez highlights the importance of education and makes a clear distinction between the education one receives at home and the education one receives at school. She argues that the education one receives at home is the first kind of education that children receive and that they then bring these values (e.g., respecting others) with them when they transition into the school system. It is then at school where children acquire a second type of education that is based on academic subject matter. These two quotes highlighting the process of educating one's children in the home and passing down generational and perhaps cultural values is a direct reflection of the familial capital (Yosso, 2006) found within these families.

Parents' also discussed sharing stories with students about their own educational experiences and transmitted messages about the importance of obtaining an education and having a career. For parents, their educational experiences were also heavily linked to their labor and migration histories which they used as examples to highlight the educational and career aspirations they had for students. As noted by Señora Fernandez:

...yo le decía a ellas que teníamos ganas de seguir estudiando pero pos no se podía... Ya que nosotros no pudimos, pos aquí estamos en el país donde uno puede terminar un nivel académico así que hay que echarle ganas. Es lo único que yo siempre les he dicho a mis hijas. Quieres ser...alguien aquí en tu vida? Pues ten to carrera, tu profesión y ya después puedes tener tu pareja, puedes tener tu familia, pero eso es secundaria. [I would tell them that we wanted to keep studying but it wasn't possible. Since we couldn't, we are in a country where one can finish an academic level, so try hard. It's the one thing I've always told my daughters. You want to be...someone in life? Well then have a career, your profession, and then later you can have a partner, you can have a family, but that is secondary].

Though Señora Fernandez had received positive messages about education from her parents, circumstances prevented her from continuing to pursue her education. She expressed to her children that they had the opportunity to do what she could not and encouraged them to try their best in school and focus their energy on their career and profession as opposed to partners and a family.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** Though the five parents I interviewed expressed the importance of education and provided numerous examples of consejos and stories they shared with students, there were still some students who did not receive positive messages about education from their parents.

**Grades.** While the majority of parents were instrumental in passing along positive messages about education, parents were not necessarily involved in checking students' grades. Though three students (Nayeli, Elena, and Karen) described receiving expectations from at least one parent that they do well in school, most students described that their parents never asked

about their grades nor expected them to get good grades. As Cynthia recalled, “I feel like my dad came kind of later. Yeah, he came kind of later. He didn't really care if I was doing good or not. He was just like, okay, cool, whatever.” At first glance, one might read this quote and assume that Cynthia’s father did not care about her school or grades. However, as I detail in the third theme about the college decision making process, her father played an instrumental role in encouraging her to attend the school of her dreams. Furthermore, Cynthia later revealed that from a young age she always did well in school, so her mother never had to sit her down and tell her to do well in school. Knowing this background information, I would argue that perhaps Cynthia’s father was not heavily concerned with her school performance because she had a track record of performing well in school. In a similar vein, Nayeli described an interaction with her mother that has continued to stay in her mind:

I was a straight A student so our progress report in high school would come sealed in an envelope and I, you know, I would leave it in the kitchen table, and I noticed two days passed by my mom didn’t open it. I’m just like Mom aren’t you gonna open my grades? She’s like [smacks lips] I already know you did good. What do you want me to do jump up and down? She wouldn’t even open my grades.

She recalled this same story in our second interview where she reiterated her beliefs that her mother did not care about her grades, and that no matter how hard she tried, her mother never acknowledged her efforts. Upon reading this quote above, one might jump to the conclusion that Nayeli’s mother did not care about her daughter’s education. Though Nayeli was uncertain about her mother’s education level, she believed that her mother most likely received a middle school education. What Nayeli did know was that her mother’s family back in the Philippines did not go to school beyond middle school as they did not have the financial resources to afford supplies, clothes, and other necessities. I include this additional context because I believe it offers a greater level of understanding about the conditions Nayeli’s mother grew up in and highlights the



inequities she experienced in not having the financial means to afford basic life necessities.

Though I do not know what messages Nayeli's mother received about education, this additional context about her family's socioeconomic status helps to perhaps paint a more nuanced picture than what the quote initially offered at first glance.

Overall, I anticipate that most parents were not heavily involved with students' grades since the majority of students had always excelled academically. I think it is possible that parents felt they had nothing to worry about and trusted their children to continue doing what they knew best. Additionally, since most of the students' parents were unfamiliar with the U.S. education system, I anticipate this also played a role in parents not knowing how to engage in the specifics of students' educational experiences.

**Gender.** Several students talked about their parents' emphasis on education as opposed to becoming pregnant in high school. Elena remembered being surrounded by young pregnant Latinas in her school and among her cousins. She recalled hearing her parents say "...either you get pregnant or you go to school..." For her parents, pregnancy was not an actual option, and they utilized this dichotomy as a reality check for what could happen if she did not finish high school and go to college. In fact, of the 70 cousins in her family, Elena was the first one to graduate from high school. It was clear among the mothers of these students that they wanted their daughters to remain focused on their education and believed partners and children could come later.

### **Parental Messages about College Transmitted to Students**

Though messages about college were slightly embedded within the participant narratives I described in the previous section, I now turn to specific messages about college that parents transmitted to students.

**Counterstory: “You have to go to college.”** Across all participant narratives, it was clear that parents strongly encouraged and expected students to go to college<sup>9</sup>. Parent expectations were both subtle and explicit. As Rosa put it, “...the familial support I guess, or aspirations of college, definitely stemmed from my parents.” Similarly, Diana recalled, “My mom was always...Oh, you gotta go to college. You gotta go to college. You gotta go to college. Always.” When I asked Diana’s mother, Señora Fernandez, about the messages she passed on to Diana about college, she shared that she and her husband had made a pact to get all of their children into college. She detailed:

Ese fue lo que mi esposo y yo quedamos desde que tuvimos los bebés. Que sí, todo los íbamos a tener que terminar hasta la universidad. Y quedamos de que ellos entraran a la universidad y ya de allí ya iba ser de ellos. [That’s what my husband and I agreed on since we had children. That we were going to have to finish them until university. And we agreed that they would go to a university and then from there it would be up to them].

It is not clear whether Señora Fernandez and her husband ever shared this pact with their three children. Regardless, it was evident in Diana’s quote above that their parents made the expectation of going to college very clear. This encouragement from parents was also influenced by individuals within their social networks. As Anahi noted:

But I think because I've been going to college prep middle schools and high schools, because they're always saying Oh, you have to go to college and they're like Oh yeah you have to go to college and coworkers saying that Oh, with a college degree, you can get paid better, and all of that and so I think that’s why they encouraged it.

Leveraging this social capital (Yosso, 2006), parents were able to understand the benefits of college and, as a result, increased the transmission of positive messages about the importance of obtaining a college degree. Beyond coworkers and school officials, parents were also exposed to

---

<sup>9</sup> I discuss more about the role of family members during the college application process in the next section.

college through their employers. Theresa recalled going with her mother to work and being exposed to college early on. She stated:

...since I was little and only because my mom was a housekeeper I think, and she still is, but she would clean these two doctor's houses who had—they were medical doctors here and they had their white coats and it had [WCU] on it. And I think that was my first exposure to university. I must've been seven or eight and I used to see this in their apartments, and I was like Ooh what is that? I wanna go to [WCU], whatever that is, you know. So, I—that kind of just permeated my brain and it simmered there. And I grew up always wanting to go to [WCU].

When Theresa was younger, she would often accompany her mother who worked as a housekeeper. Her mother looked after the homes of two doctors and it was in these homes that Theresa recalled seeing their white coats with the name [WCU] written on them. From that moment on, it became her dream to attend [WCU], a dream that would eventually be realized years later. She subsequently elaborated in the interview:

But yeah it was definitely my mom, I think, and I think it was because she was surrounded by the folks that she was working with. I think her employer—now the 40 year one—is a lawyer and, you know, I think she was around this kind of like, Oh this is what education will—you can have this with education and I'm like Mom it's [laughs] more complicated than that. I don't like math. I don't like science, so I won't be a doctor for sure [laughs]. That's off the table. Law school forget it. That's not for me. So, I... yeah maybe she felt like I don't know this is the one secure route at least in America.

Theresa believed that because her mother was surrounded by well-educated people, she was able to glean a particular understanding about the possibilities that could exist by going to college and encouraged Theresa to do so. At the time, her mother was under the impression that the mere act of going to college would afford Theresa a similar lifestyle as that of her employers. Theresa remembered explaining to her mother that the reality of college was much different and that she was not going to be a lawyer or doctor like the employers she worked for. Understandably, Theresa's mother was unaware of the differences in salary across various professions. While Theresa's mother did not expect Theresa to be a doctor or lawyer, these two careers were the

only ones she had a context for. Similarly, several students mentioned that parents only knew of a few careers, among them being a doctor or lawyer. Parents viewed these careers as prestigious and hoped that students would want to pursue one of the two.

**Tensions, contradictions, and challenges.** While the majority of students and parents discussed the transmission of positive messages about college, one mother did recall that she did not emphasize college or have many conversations with her daughter about the subject. As Señora Montellano stated,

Pues la verdad pues sí eran mis ganas y todo, pero no era un enfoque en eso. Simplemente yo la he apoyada de chiquita verdad y pos hasta donde...llegan ya con el estudio, pero sí yo pensé que iba ser algo grande porque toda la vida ella ha sido una alumna estrella se puede decir porque siempre pura A plus me sacó. Desde kínder pura A plus, pura A plus. Nunca me sacó una letra menos. Nunca. Desde kínder yo fui a sus juntas de ella y los maestros—yo mis juntas eran en un minuto, dos minutos porque pues no tenían nada que decirme. [Well truthfully it was my desire and everything, but there wasn't an emphasis on that. I have simply supported her since she was young and until...they arrive with their schooling, but yes I did think that she was going to be something big because all her life she's been a start student you could say because she always brought back A+. Since kindergarten always A+, always A+. She never brought back anything lower. Never. Since kindergarten, I would go to her meetings and my meetings with the teacher—would be one minute, two minutes because they didn't have anything to tell me].

When I asked her how often they talked about college, Señora Montellano responded that they never really discussed that subject much because her daughter was very reserved and because she personally liked to live life in the moment taking it day by day. For example, she discussed caring about Anahi's grades, but only concerned herself with this each day at a time. As Señora Montellano detailed in the quote above, she believed Anahi was destined for great things because she had always done well in school. Though she hoped Anahi would attend college, she admitted that she did not emphasize this or make it much of a focus while Anahi was growing up. While I do not know for certain why Señora Montellano did not place much of an emphasis on college, one possibility might be that she did not have the knowledge or language to bring up the topic.

In fact, Señora Rodriguez mentioned several times during the interview that even though Anahi has explained things about school and college to her, she still remains unsure about what it all means. Though she does not understand it for herself, she commented that she trusted Anahi to know what she is doing and what is best for her.

While Rosa commented that her parents had expected her to go to college, she said this was not the case for her older sister, Esmeralda. She recalled the following memory:

And my dad I feel like at first, he actually opposed to my oldest sister going to college. So, when she graduated high school, he was saying, he's like, Oh, cause her name's [Esmeralda], he's like [Esmeralda], when do you want me to start asking at my job when you can start working there? We—I can find you a position and she [*sic*] kept saying that and my sister's very shy and she wouldn't say No I don't wanna do that, I wanna go to school. Until my mom was fed up with it and she's like, Do not tell her that anymore. She's not going to work with you. She's gonna go to school and you have no right to stop her from doing that. And eventually he then expected us two, the other two, to just continue in the same footsteps cause I think he saw how beneficial that was and he saw the perks of it...I always think that maybe he thought it would be a waste of time cause we wouldn't be committed or it wouldn't be something beneficial for us or our growth, but I think he got it now. He gets it.

As Rosa mentioned in the quote, her father was very opposed to Esmeralda going off to college. He was under the impression that she would join him at work and kept bringing it up to Esmeralda. Eventually, her mother intervened and told him to stop asking her about work and that she was allowed to make whatever decision she wanted. Though this tension existed for Esmeralda, when it was time for Rosa and her other sister to graduate from high school, her father expected them to follow in Esmeralda's footsteps. Rosa believed that by witnessing Esmeralda's journey in college, their father was able to understand the importance of getting a college education. When I spoke to Esmeralda, she was able to provide a little more context to Rosa's narrative. She recalled that her mother was very adamant for her to go to college, but her father was opposed to it. She remembered standing up to him and saying:

Oh, this is what I want to do. I don't see myself getting married. ....I don't wanna work in the fields. I wanna do something different because it's not challenging for me. This is what I've seen all my life. I want something different.

When I asked Esmeralda why her father had objected to her wanting to go to college, it was clear that she had not thought much about it and was unsure as to his reasoning behind it. However, she did speculate that her father may have been afraid that she would not do well socially in college and that he just wanted her to get married. She thought that part of this may have had to do with the fact that Esmeralda had been the first grandchild on her father's side to go off to college, so her father never grew up with the context of going to college. On the other hand, she attributed her mother's encouragement for college to the fact that all of her mother's nieces and nephews received degrees in Mexico.

Furthermore, there were differing opinions from students and parents about the extent to which they had conversations about college. The majority of students told me that outside of being expected to go to college, they had minimal conversations about college with their parents. Meanwhile, most of the parents commented that they frequently had conversations about college with students. For example, when I asked Elena to what extent her family talked about college, she replied, "...they didn't really talk to me much about college." Yet, when I asked her mother, Señora Rodriguez, she replied with the following:

Hablábamos pues siempre que—porque le llegaban los papeles desde del sexto grado si no miento. Le llegaban los papeles de las universidades invitándola. Aha. Y por eso le digo luego....Mira mami si tu quieres ir a ésta, tienes que hacerla así, así. Tenemos que investigar más, saber como. Mami, todavía falta mucho decía ella, todavía falta mucho. Pero de todos modos le digo...hay que dejarlos. [Well, we always talked when—because she would get papers since the 6th grade if I'm not mistaken. She would get papers from the universities inviting her. Aha. And then....Look mami if you want to go to this one, you have to do it like this, this. We have to investigate more, know how to. She would say, Mom there's still a lot of time, there's still a lot of time. I tell her it doesn't matter either way.]

According to Señora Rodriguez, she and Elena would always talk about college, especially around 6<sup>th</sup> grade when Elena began receiving information from colleges through the mail. She recalled telling Elena that it did not matter that college was still years away for her and that it was important for them to find out more information about the college process. Though she says, “we have to investigate more,” Elena was the one who asked around about how to apply to colleges. This individual process of seeking out college information described the majority of students’ experiences, particularly those who were the oldest and therefore the first in their family to go off to college. Given that all of the students were first-generation and most came from immigrant families, parents were not knowledgeable about what college was and what their children needed to do to get in. As Karen’s mother, Señora Garcia , expressed “...como no conozco ni colegios, ni universidades, ni nada” [...I don’t know any colleges, universities, or anything]. For students, they knew they had to go to college, but most had no idea how to get there. For example, Reyna commented, “I don’t know how I’m gonna go to college, but I have to go because this was—my parents told me I had to.” Similarly, Karen commented, “Yeah they just wanted me to graduate from a university. I guess...they didn’t know which—the universities and the rankings they just—as long as you graduate from a university, I guess.”

**Gender.** Embedded within several students’ narratives were tensions they experienced with their parents surrounding their gender. In addition to feeling as though her mother did not care about her schooling or grades, Nayeli discussed never feeling encouraged by her mother to go to college. She recalled:

My mom...she’s like You don’t need college. You’re beautiful. You could find a sugar daddy or something you know because her—she’s a Filipino culture, so, their women are just domesticated, and they just rely on husbands. So, I think my mom has a lot of boyfriends, cause she’s used to them treat...paying for everything.

In the quote above, Nayeli described her mother as very vocal about her physical appearance and suggested she leverage her beauty to find a “sugar daddy” that could take care of her. Nayeli’s sister, Victoria, made similar comments about their mom always telling them they needed to find a man to take care of them. Rooted in Nayeli’s explanation for why her mother might have passed along these messages, are her own stereotypical depictions of “Filipino culture” wherein “women are just domesticated, and they just rely on their husbands.” To rely on an oversimplified explanation such as the one above that also reinforces stereotypes of the Filipino culture would be irresponsible of me. Just as I brought up similar associations in Chapter 2 about gender dynamics in the Latino culture, I argue that we cannot make claims about behaviors or beliefs as somehow being inherent of a particular culture or engage in generalizations about particular groups of people. As I explained in the previous section, Nayeli speculated that her mother as well as the rest of her mother’s family did not receive more than a middle school education and lacked the financial resources to afford basic necessities. While I did not interview her mother, I would like to offer up one possible explanation as to the messages she passed on to Nayeli and Victoria. Knowing that she did not possess an education, it is possible that Nayeli’s mother turned to the one thing that she did possess, her feminine body. I would argue that using her body was the only way she knew how to survive in a world that makes it very difficult for those who do not possess an education. To add further complexity, Nayeli described to me an interaction that her sister Victoria had with their mother:

So, my sister, she cries to my mom....saying I don’t know what to...I can’t do it. I’m struggling in school and work. And then my mom’s like Don’t take it so hard....just don’t do it. You don’t have to. Just don’t stress. Your health is more important than school. And then she’s like Don’t go to, you know, don’t do higher ed.

The tone of this second quote reflected that of a concerned mother who would rather not see her child suffer through the stress of school. According to Nayeli, Victoria had expressed to their



mother how difficult it was to work and go to school at the same time. As a result, their mother suggested that Victoria did not have to attend college if it meant being stressed all the time. In her mother's eyes, good health was important to maintain even if that came at the expense of not going to college. Still, growing up and watching how her mother navigated the world served as a motivating factor to pursue a college degree. She noted:

...being low-income motivated me, because I see my mom obviously, low-income because she depended on men to support her, but she does work now full time and everything but still not enough. She still has—she moved to Washington to go live with a man. Yeah. So, because I see her struggling financially without a college degree wanting to depend on a guy, that pushed me away like, No, I need to be self-sufficient and I need to go to college and you know so yeah because I'm low income, that motivated me because I saw how my mom was living. That made me want to go.

According to Nayeli, growing up low-income and watching her mother have to rely on men for financial support proved to be an important lesson and one of the reasons why she wanted to pursue a college degree in the first place. Her belief was that obtaining a college degree would allow her to become self-sufficient and not have to struggle financially. This desire for self-sufficiency was also evident in Elena's narrative:

But, just the thought of being independent. I saw how my mom depended on my dad a lot for money and I saw how much they argued. And I vowed to myself that there was never going to be a time where I was dependent on a man ever. I wanted my own income. I wanted to have my own—just be independent. And I learned that through education, that was the only way, so I stuck with that...But yeah...I just with that vowed to myself that I'll never be dependent on a man or anyone for income. That's what I—was stuck with me and what inspired me to get a higher education.

Similar to Nayeli, Elena grew up watching her mother be financially dependent on her father and vowed to herself that she would be self-sufficient and never depend on anyone else for income. She saw education as the one way to escape a similar fate for herself and used it as a source of motivation for her to pursue higher education.

**Socioeconomic status.** For Anahi in particular, the encouragement she received from her parents to go to college was directly tied to her family's socioeconomic status. She noted having frequent conversations with her parents where they told her “vas a sacarnos de la pobreza” [you're going to lift us out of poverty] and “tu nos vas a mantener” [you are going to support us]. For Anahi, hearing these messages was a source of pressure for her. In the following quote, she elaborated more on what it meant for her to hear these messages from her parents:

I don't know it puts a lot of pressure on me because it makes me feel like I have to know what I need to do. And right now, I don't know what I wanna do yet. And so then, it makes me feel like I should know already this is the career path that I want to have. I should be making money as well, which is like a big issue that I have with my parents and doing a...career that I feel passionate about, compared to a career that is gonna bring me a lot of money and a lot of wealth. And then also I'm just scared like What if I really can't—I'm still trying to pay some stuff or whatever I'm doing, and I don't have enough money to you know fully mantenerlos either. It makes me feel like, I failed them in a way. All their hard work coming to this country and crossing the border it was all worth...for nothing and their continuous labor that they put in at work if I'm not able to help them and provide for the family in the way that they want me to provide for the family as well.

As evidenced in her quote, Anahi felt pressure to decide between a career that could potentially allow her to make a lot of money or a career that she felt passionate about. She was worried about potentially not being able to help support her parents and consequently feeling like a failure if she was not able to do so. Anahi had seen all of the sacrifices her parents made over the years and confessed she would feel as though all of that effort was done in vain if she cannot support them. She continued:

...I think for them, they want me to buy them a little home or something and I do want to, but that's a long time. And I feel like for them...it's very hard to comprehend and understand...that once you come out of undergrad or even if you go into graduate school, it can be a process to get there and they don't understand the amount of time that that might take depending on the job and so then they think that once I'm done with [WCU], Oh, this is when the wealth is gonna come, but it's not...Yeah it doesn't work like that. They don't understand the system...and then they think that O es que no nos quiere mantener [Oh it's because you don't want to support me]. And I'm like, No, it's not that it's just that it's hard. It's really hard being a student and then trying to find a job and do

all of that. And so, I don't know, it puts a lot of pressure on me feeling like I can't fail them. I don't have any room for failures or even taking a year off or doing anything of that.

She expressed that one of the difficulties was her parents' belief that money would come once she graduated from college and explaining to her parents that this was not the case. Still, her parent's misunderstandings about college and the economic rewards of a degree contributed to their beliefs that Anahi simply did not want to financially support them.

### **Familial Messages about Education and College Transmitted to Students**

Parents were not the only ones to pass down messages to students. Students received explicit and implicit messages about education and college from older siblings, cousins, and grandparents.

**Counterstory: Education and college was a big push.** To further elaborate on the positive messages students received from siblings and cousins, I highlight the narratives of Cynthia, Lorena, Rosa, and Elena. Cynthia's sister, Sara, spoke about more subtle and indirect ways of showing her son and Cynthia that college was important:

...and so, when I graduated, they were I think they were six years old. They went to my graduation and you know they were part of it and they—I'm sure they didn't understand everything, but you know they have that memory of Oh yeah...I went to your graduation for college.

With at least 33 first cousins, Cynthia not only attended her sister Sara's graduation but also attended the graduation ceremonies of many of her older cousins. As Sara later explained, "And subsequently now going to all the other cousins' college graduations, it's become more and more engraved you know." Even before attending these graduation ceremonies, Cynthia recalled being exposed to college as early as six or seven when she spent time at her cousin's university and residence hall. In addition to these implicit messages about college, Cynthia also received explicit messages about college. She explained, "...a lot of my cousins too...that are my sister's

generation, they were always like, You need to go to school. Go to college. Get a degree. Stuff like that so I'd say, yeah, it was always a big push.” As one of the youngest among the first generation of children within her extended family, Cynthia commented that she was able to see her cousins’ educational journeys and has been fortunate enough to receive their guidance throughout her own journey. She also explained how different it must have felt for them being first-generation like her but being the first one’s in the family to go through the process and not have any knowledge of how to do so. We see how the navigational and social capital (Yosso, 2006) that was acquired by her siblings and cousins was transferred over to Cynthia in the form of familial capital (Yosso, 2006). Sara was not the only participant to reflect on the impact of attending graduation ceremonies. Lorena recalled the following memory about her older sister’s graduation:

We went to her graduation and that was really cool cause it was just like, Ah!!! Look what you did. We’re so proud of you. And it was just being—for my parents it was just so much pride and it’s just like Look at what my kid did, and I was like Look at what my sister did! And it’s just collectively being like Wow!

I would argue that the act of her sister going to college and graduating from WCU served as an important reminder for Lorena that college was important and that she too could one day accomplish the same goal. It is no surprise that Lorena followed in her sister’s footsteps in high school and also enrolled at WCU. Though Lorena also had older cousins, she was not particularly close with them. Still, she remembered seeing them go through college and thinking “it’s definitely possible.”

Rosa received very explicit messages from her older sisters. She explained:

But I think at the beginning, they always told me about how—just the importance of it you know. If you're not going to college, what are you gonna go do? Are you gonna work with dad? Do you wanna work with dad? I'm like No. So okay well go do that....

The decision for Rosa to attend college became clear when her sisters asked her point blank if she wanted to work in the fields with their father or go to college. Rosa later added, "...for my sisters it's like No. There's no option. You have to go. This is the only way of being able to do better than we think that we can do." Her sisters were constantly pushing her to do well in high school and to go to college. Esmeralda, Rosa's sister, commented that she saw it as her responsibility to be there for her and pass along positive messages about education and college. Esmeralda noted that she did not always receive positive and supportive messages about education and college when she was younger, so she took it upon herself to pass along these important messages to Rosa. When I spoke to Esmeralda, she confirmed that she always emphasized the importance of college. She stated:

I always told my sisters if I was able to go to UC Merced or I was accepted to other schools better than UC Merced, but I decided to go to UC Merced, I expected them to do better than me because they can learn from me.

Esmeralda had very high expectations and aspirations for her sisters to achieve greater things beyond what she herself was able to achieve. Having acquired knowledge throughout her own educational journey as the first child in her family to pursue a college degree, Esmeralda was able to pass along this insight to her two younger sisters. Yosso (2006) would describe this as embodying aspirational, navigational, and familial capital.

Finally, similar to Cynthia's extended family, Elena came from a big family with a little over 70 cousins. Though many of her older cousins attended high school, many of them dropped out before graduating. She recalled receiving the following consejos [advice] from them:

...we would see those smarty pants. We thought that they were just losers because all they did was study but then now, we see them and they're happy, they have a job. I wish I could go back and focus on school. Don't be like us. Go and achieve your dream...

Later in the interview, she recalled her cousins also telling her “you don’t want to be like us...meaning you don’t want to be having kids, being poor, not being able to afford clothes sometimes. You want to go get educated to become better.” This was one of several motivating factors that led to Elena becoming the first person in her entire family to graduate from high school and now college. For Elena, like many other students in the study, seeing family members struggle financially and unable to access higher paying jobs served as a motivation to continue with her education. She knew that going to college would not only make a difference in her life but also that of her family’s.

In addition to siblings and cousins, students also discussed having received positive messages from other extended family members. For example, Nayeli recalled her grandparents telling her that education was “the door to opportunities to get a good job” and that college would allow her to secure “a high paying job.” Once Nayeli finished high school, she gave birth to a daughter and eventually parted ways with her daughter’s father. At that point, she tried to move in with her grandparents, but they made it clear that she could only move in if she worked and went to school. This served as one of several motivating factors that led Nayeli to enroll in a local community college. Reyna’s grandparents similarly encouraged her to study and believed that she was going to go far. She recalled several conversations with her grandparents:

So, my grandma would also say, You have to go to school. I never finished school. I couldn't go to school, because I had to help my—her grandma with food and so she would say I never went to school, but you have to go to school. Then my grandpa is the same. He would tell me Once you graduate, ooh you’re gonna be so good. You’re gonna be rich. You’re gonna do so many things. You’re gonna learn a lot of things. So, my grandpa he just expected us—it was just expectation and I think that’s what was the most valuable to me. They didn’t know. They couldn’t tell me Do this. Apply to that. Or I know this person who went to college. Whatever. But the expectation was the thing that drove me to not letting them down.

Similar to the stories I highlighted earlier about parents sharing their own educational experiences with students, grandparents also took a similar approach in transmitting positive messages about education to their grandchildren. As highlighted in the quote above, Reyna's grandparents believed she would graduate from college and would make little comments like "when you graduate." For Reyna, this expectation that her grandparents verbalized to her was an important motivating factor for her to continue pursuing her degree. In fact, when I recruited Reyna for the study, she was in the final few weeks of finishing up her degree at WCU. She did in fact complete all degree requirements in June 2019.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** Though most students reported receiving positive messages from their siblings and extended family members, two students, Diana and Reyna, revealed never receiving any messages about college from older siblings and/or cousins.

**Gender.** Karen recalled receiving conflicting messages from her family members back in Guatemala. Having grown up in Guatemala before coming to the U.S., Karen communicated that her upbringing "was mostly...learn how to read and write, do math, marry, have kids, and you're good to go, and then you're done." Even now living in the U.S., Karen commented that her grandmother never fails to bring up topics related to boyfriends and marriage. Despite receiving these messages from her grandmother, Karen was grateful that her parents had always, even back in Guatemala, supported her studies and never placed any expectations of marriage on her. As Karen's mother, Señora Garcia, described to me:

Yo dije mi hija tiene que ir a la universidad. Porque yo siempre le digo a mis hijas Miren mamaíta aprovechen sus juventudes le digo porque esta bueno casarse le digo, pero a cierta edad porque casarse uno muy joven le digo vienen los hijos y es una gran responsabilidad. Ustedes no pueden hacer nada y como se ven muchos espejos seño de que los muchachos solo embarazan a las muchachas, viven un año, dos años, y ya ni se quedó. Y entonces miya que va ser de su vida le digo yo. No mamaíta. [I said my daughter has to go to a university. Because I always tell my daughters look mamaíta take advantage of your youth because it's good to get married, but until you reach a certain

age because marrying at a young age, then comes kids, and it's a big responsibility. You can't do anything, and you see many instances where the guys get girls pregnant, they live together for a year, two years, and then he doesn't stay. So miya what will become of your life. No mamáita].

Evident in this quote and in the much larger interview with Señora Garcia was a consistent theme of wanting her daughter to make the most out of her youth, which could only be achieved through education and a good career.

Gendered expectations of marriage were also touched upon by Sara, Cynthia's sister. As Sara explained, the grandchildren within her extended family received two very confusing messages that were difficult to balance:

on one hand you're being told to be completely subservient and serving to find a partner and be that wife and you know the take care of your home, but at the same time we were also told do everything that you can to propel yourself socially and so school was very, very much a big deal.

For Sara, the conflict lay in navigating various roles which included being raised with a family first mentality while also being told to "propel yourself socially." It is important to note that though Sara described these messages as prevalent throughout her life, at no point did Cynthia ever mention having received similar messages. This may be due to the big age difference between Sara and Cynthia allowing for new messages to be transmitted across time.

### **K-12 Support and Involvement**

Within this section, I highlight the relationships students had with parents and family members and demonstrate examples of support shown on both sides.

#### **Parent-Student Relationship**

The extent to which parents were engaged in students' K-12 educational experience was a direct reflection of the strength of their relationship with students, their employment, and knowledge of English. Though these factors did shape engagement levels, the majority of



participants expressed that parents supported students in a variety of ways and in whatever capacity they could.

**Counterstory: Direct involvement.** Interviews with students and parents revealed that some parents were more hands on and directly involved with students. For example, Señora Rodriguez was a very involved mother who always kept track of Elena's whereabouts. She always knew who she was associating with and encouraged her to distance herself from peers who could get her into trouble. On several occasions, she visited Elena's school to advocate for her daughter's safety and reputation. She even mentioned switching Elena to a new middle school due to bullying. Señora Montellano was another mother who was heavily involved with her daughter Anahi's school. She told me:

Pues mira cuando ella estaba chiquita por eso me metí a trabajar a la escuela para poder llevarle sus lonches porque yo se que aquella no le gustaba las comidas del escuela. Y luego... estaba yendo al centro de padres... dando tiempo del mío para algo que se ofreciera estar yo allí cerquita. [Well, see when she was younger, that's why I worked at the school to bring her lunch because I knew she didn't like the school food. And then... I was going to the parents' center... offering my time for anything that anyone needed being there close by].

By working at the school Anahi attended, Señora Montellano was able to bring Anahi lunches and be close by to watch over her. Anahi also recalled that her mother would walk around during lunch and help the other kids. Anahi also mentioned that because her mother worked at the school, she knew which teachers were the "good ones" and was not afraid to ask for Anahi to switch teachers. This example illustrates how Señora Montellano was able to tap into the social capital (Yosso, 2006) she had acquired by working at the school and forming relationships with school personnel and ensure that Anahi would receive the best educational experiences.

**Counterstory: Moral and emotional support.** The majority of students described their parents, particularly their mothers, as being there to provide them moral and emotional support.

Parents were described as cheerleaders because they cheered students' on at competitions or school related functions. Parents also commonly encouraged students with words such as "you can do it" and expressed their confidence in students that even if they did not know how to do something, they would find a way to figure it out. These displays of familial capital (Yosso, 2006) through parents' encouragement and emotional and moral support was similarly experienced across other students. Anahi recalled the following support from her father:

I think he would just provide that moral support. You can do this. You just have to really try your best and put an effort and he's always like Give yourself a break. If you don't get it, give yourself a break. Un descansito y luego regresas [A break and then you come back]. Yeah so, he would tell me those things like that...and then he would say Vez así como yo [See like me] he's like Trabajo de las siete hasta las tres y media y luego ya me tomo mi descanso todo el día. [I work from 7:00 to 3:30 and then I rest the rest of the day]. And he always bring it back to him and I'm like Okay, I guess.

Consejos [advice] like the one Anahi's father gave her about trying her best and giving herself a break before going back to work were common among parents. Furthermore, this sentiment that students had to "echarle ganas" [give it everything they had] was something that was also similarly expressed among participants.

Parents also saw many tears from students and provided a lot of emotional support in terms of listening to their struggles and talking through problems and solutions. In addition to this emotional support, three students discussed how helpful it was for their mom to provide them with nourishment. As Anahi recalled, her mother would always have food ready for her. Her mom would tell her, "O se que estas cansada y tienes hambre entonces hice de comer." [I know you're tired and you're hungry, so I made you food].

**Counterstory: Parent-teacher conferences.** Four students and one parent brought up parent teacher conferences as another form of involvement. One of these students, did note that her math teacher did ask to meet with her mother three times. For context, Theresa explained that

her math teacher had always expressed condescension towards her, and that math was a subject in which she needed extra help in. Though Theresa's mother met with her teacher every time a meeting was scheduled and never complained, Theresa recognized the stress in her mother each time she had to take off work for these meetings. Recalling this memory elicited an emotional response from Theresa in that she expressed frustration with the way her teacher asked for these meetings without ever stopping to consider a student's home situation and the potential implications that might come with having to miss work and receive less money for the week.

**Counterstory: Financial support.** Four students and one parent also brought up monetary assistance as a form of support. Students noted that their parents worked really hard to be able to provide them with books, backpacks, school supplies, clothes and shoes. Cynthia even recalled her mother helping her with a fundraiser to raise money for an organization she had created in high school. She stated, "Oh my God we fundraised like crazy. Brownies. Me and my mom were up in the mornings making little breakfast burritos and we would sell them in the mornings." Furthermore, even when parents did not have the money, they still handed over their credit cards because they knew that anything related to school was important. As Señora Montellano, Anahi's mother recalled:

...de hecho cuando estuvo en high school me parece, llegó a necesitar uno, dos libros. No te voy a decir que muchos. Mami ocupo tal libro. Ten hija. Allí esta la tarjeta de crédito. Y sabrá Dios como estaba yo en las tarjetas de crédito. [In fact, when she was in high school, I think she needed one or two books. I'm not going to tell you she needed a lot. Mom I need such book. Here you go hija. The credit card is there. And only God knows how I was doing with credit cards].

In addition to helping Anahi with books, Señora Montellano would continue to provide financial support throughout the college application process, something that I will come back to in the next section. Though it meant putting the charges on her credit card, Señora Montellano always helped out Anahi whenever she could.

**Counterstory: Helping with homework.** Though many family members were unfamiliar with the U.S. education system, several parents discussed being at home with students and teaching and helping out wherever they could. For a couple of parents, this meant teaching students Spanish and how to say the alphabet. A couple of other parents also recalled helping out with math and quizzing students with mental math and percentages and sitting down to decipher homework with students. Elena recalled that her father was “really involved in my elementary math.” She elaborated:

I remember he'll have a beer and he'll have me sitting right here and he'd be like What's 3 times 3? I'd be like 10 and then he'd be like No! It's 9. And I'd be like Okay. But yeah, he'll help me study with math a lot yeah and I think that's kind of where my...passion for math kinda stemmed from. I would go and compete in math in elementary and I was really good at it.

Elena remembered her father sitting down with her to quiz her on multiplication tables. He would continue to help her with math until about the sixth grade when he was no longer familiar with the concepts discussed in her class. It was in these moments as Elena later described, that she believed she developed a passion for math and would go on to compete in math competitions in elementary. Elena's mom, Señora Rodriguez, also recalled moments when both she and her husband tried to get Elena to sit down and read or do her math homework. In these moments, she described Elena as easily frustrated, distracted, and not wanting to do work. Similarly, Diana's mother, Señora Fernandez, commented that her husband taught all three of her kids math. She described:

Con su papá aprendieron todo lo que era matemáticas. El papá les enseña cualquier cosa mentalmente y mi esposo trabaja en construcción y yo solo tuvimos la primaria. Yo no tuve secundaria y el tampoco en México. Y aquí su papá se dedicó con ellos a las cuentas. Todo...es mental y hasta la fecha...no los deja que usen la computadora cuando están con él para las matemáticas. Les quita el teléfono. Haber cuanto es esto por esto y el por ciento de todo...y mi esposo desde chiquito los inculcó así las matemáticas. Voltea la cinco por siete y ahora siete por cinco. Voltéala y te da el mismo resultado. [With their dad, they learned everything that had to do with math. Their dad shows them anything

mentally and my husband works in construction and he and I only went to elementary. I didn't go to middle school in Mexico and neither did he. And here, their dad dedicated himself to teaching them calculations. Everything...is mental and to this day... he doesn't let them use a computer to do math when they're with him. He takes away the phone. Let's see, how much is this times this and the percentage of everything...and my husband taught them math like that from a young age. Flip  $5 \times 7$  and now  $7 \times 5$ . Flip it and it gives you the same result.

Having only an elementary education, Señora Fernandez's husband took it upon himself to teach his children how to do mental math calculations. She commented that to this day he continues to quiz them about percentages and later described it as almost like a hobby for the family. Finally, Anahi and her mother, Señora Montellano, both recalled with great detail the lengths Señora Montellano would go to help her Anahi with homework. As an English language learner, Anahi recalled how difficult school was for her. She recalled being in bilingual classes in the first grade and having to do English homework. She further detailed:

Whenever I had my English homework, well, I didn't know how to do it so then she would have the dictionary in one hand, and I remember it was a little machine and she would input the words, and then it would come out in Spanish. And then, and she would have my homework in the other and she would try to help me out. Yeah, and so she—I remember her doing a lot of that.

Given that Spanish was both of their first language, I can only imagine how challenging it must have been for Señora Montellano to sit down with a machine in one hand and a dictionary in the other hand trying to understand a foreign language. In her interview, Señora Montellano elaborated on what the process was like for her:

Y luego en las tarea, pues yo no se inglés. Sentándome con ella en el sillón en las tardes con el teléfono en la mano y un diccionario y hablándoles a mis hermanas, hablándoles a mis amigas que quiere decir esta palabra porque yo no le hallaba. Yo no la hallaba. No entendía...y me decían a ver dime—me decían mis hermanas—dime como se dice. Te la voy a decir...como se dice y ya les decía. Y ellas las notaban y ya me decían quiere decir esto. Entonces...yo nunca me desesperé, ni le grité...[And then for homework, well I don't know English. I would sit with her on the couch in the afternoons with the telephone in one hand and a dictionary and would call my sisters, call my friends to ask them what a word meant because I couldn't find it. I couldn't find it. I didn't understand...and they would tell me—my sisters would tell me—tell me how you say it.

I'm going to tell you...how you say it and I would tell them. And they would write them down and then they would tell me it means this. So, there was...was some time that—but I never got frustrated, nor did I yell at her...].

As Señora Montellano recalled, she would sit down with Anahi in the afternoons with the telephone in one hand along with a dictionary. She then called her sisters and friends on the phone to ask for their help in understanding what words meant. Not knowing a word of English, she was quick to point out that she never once became frustrated or yelled at Anahi while they tried to figure out her homework. Tapping into her social and familial capital (Yossol, 2006) was the one thing that allowed Señora Montellano to help her daughter. This process of tapping into one's social networks was also evident in Señora Garcia's recollection of inquiring about tutoring for her daughter Karen. She remembered:

Yo solo se que a veces platicábamos dentro de las madres y me dicen No fijase que hay tutoría. No me dice...después de la escuela que se queden para que les ayuden en sus trabajos porque como yo no se nada, ni el inglés. Entonces le dije Mamáita le dije investigue usted en la oficina o fui yo a la oficina allá. Entonces me dijo Sí seño... hay tutoría. ¿Quieres hacer tutoría para su--Sí seño le dije porque yo no puedo hacer y no tengo de la familia quien le ayude a mi hija hacer su tarea. [I only know that sometimes we would talk among the mothers and they tell me No, see there's tutoring. No, she tells...they stay after school so they can get help with their homework because I don't know anything, not even English. So, I told her Mamáita you investigate in the office or I went to the office over there. So, she told me yes ma'am...there's tutoring. Do you want to set up tutoring for your—Yes ma'am I said because I can't do it and I don't have family who can help my daughter with her homework].

Utilizing the social capital (Yosso, 2006) she gained by talking to other mothers from the school, Señora Garcia learned about the tutoring services that were offered there. Though she had initially told Karen to look into this service, she went to the school office herself and inquired about getting Karen tutoring. She further elaborated:

...pues primero hice una pregunta que era los requisitos y todo verdad y entonces me dijo No hay problema seño. Usted pues necesita teléfono de casa. No teníamos teléfono de casa y entonces—también...puede llegar el maestro o maestra en casa y si yo ya iba empezar a trabajar y dije...si mandan un maestro a mi casa no, no, no es mejor por teléfono. Entonces pues vi yo que no me pidieron tanto requisitos ni nada. Entonces

inscribí a mi hija y entonces pues nos mandaron un formulario, lo llenamos a que hora queríamos que el tutor se comunicara con ella y dos años tuvo ella tutoría. [...well, first I asked a question about what the requirements were and everything right and then she said No problem ma'am. Well, you will need a home phone. We didn't have a home phone and so—also the teacher (male) or teacher (female) can go to your home and if I was going to start working and I said...if they send a teacher (male) to my home no, no, no it's better to do it over the phone. So, then I saw that they didn't ask for many requirements or anything. So, then I signed up my daughter and they sent me an application, we filled in what time we wanted the tutor to communicate with her and she had tutoring for two years].

Though she did not have a home phone at the time, Señora Garcia gladly complied with that requirement. Furthermore, in her eyes, doing tutoring over the phone was a much better option than allowing a male teacher to come into her home unsupervised while she was away at work. Karen received tutoring every afternoon for two years. At one point during the interview, Señora Garcia mentioned that while she was unable to help Karen with homework once they moved to the U.S., she had previously been able to help her with homework when they lived in Guatemala. She remembered, “No allá en Guatemala como era en español... todo eso...pues yo lo sabia hacer y entonces en ciertas cositas pues yo le ayudaba hacer. Cuando dejaba ciertos trabajos pues yo podía ayudarlos.” [No over there in Guatemala because it was in Spanish...all of that...well I knew how to do it and so with certain things well I was able to help her do it. When I left certain jobs, well I was able to help them]. Of course, moving to the U.S. made things difficult given that she did not know English, and thus, could no longer help her daughter with schoolwork.

**Counterstory: Providing transportation.** Parents played an important role in supporting their children by providing transportation. This often meant dropping off and/or picking students up from school (K-12 and community college), taking the bus with them to school, driving them to and from games or academic competitions, and taking them anywhere they needed to be no longer how long the drive was. I now turn to specific examples that

elucidate the lengths parents were willing to go to be able to provide reliable transportation for their children. Señor Hernandez, the only father interviewed for this study recalled:

Mira siempre iba yo por ellas a la escuela cuando estaban en la primaria y me tenia que salir del trabajo yo para ir por ellas. Ellas veían el como te diré el sacrificio que yo hacia. ...yo me escapaba, agarraba mi hora de lonche para ir por ellas a la escuela. Entonces yo decía y les hacia ver las cosas que estaban pasando para que ellas le pusieran mas este empeño al estudio. [Look, I always picked them up from school when they were in elementary and I had to get out of work to go get them. They saw, how should I say, the sacrifice that I made. I would get out, take the one hour from my lunch to go pick them up from school. So, I would say, and I would make them see things that were happening so that they would put more effort into studying].

As Señor Hernandez described in the quotes above, he would pick up his daughters from elementary school and would take a shorter lunch break in order to leave 30 minutes earlier to go pick them up from school. From his perspective, he felt his daughters saw the sacrifice that he would make, and it was in these instances that he would talk to them and encourage them to keep studying. He continued:

...con ese trafiquero de regreso. Que yo salí a las cinco...cuatro y media...cinco de la tarde, pero pedí al cinco permiso, cortaba media hora de mi lonche, y me iba por allá a las cuatro y media. Ella—mi otra hija también se quedaba clases a veces. Yo les esperaba a fuera. De allí, imagínate agarrar el 60 un hora y media para llegar a casa de regreso entonces. [...with that traffic on the way back. I got off at five...four thirty...five in the afternoon, but I asked off at five, I would cut 30 minutes off my lunch, and I would leave to go over there at four thirty. She—my other daughter would also stay after classes. I would wait for them outside. From there, imagine getting on the 60 for an hour and a half to return back home].

He remembered the drive back home would take him about 1 hour and 30 minutes due to traffic.

Similarly, Theresa recalled the following about her mother:

And so, my mom would drive me every day from Beverly Hills to Northridge in the 101/405 traffic. We'd leave two hours earlier right. And that's something that I'm—in this beat up little Corolla that she had and it's like, Damn, that makes me emotional. Just thinking about the work that my mom's put in for me to get something. I'm like She didn't have to do that. She could've just—it just makes me feel some type of way cause I really do think that my mom is the reason why I'm here and I've been able to achieve everything and it could have just been easier for her to be like Hey stay at home y toma el [take the] bus, but I think she wanted to be that source of support, that figure that wasn't



just there supporting me verbally but also physically. I don't know that just makes me so emotional. So, I'm like it's not easy to—you ask me to come for you on the 405. Girl I must love you cause I'm not gonna do that for nobody. That's just nasty traffic. I'm not gonna do that you know. And then just when I had activities, you know, my mom would be there. I don't know how but she was there.

As it was in the previous example, traffic made commuting that much longer. Theresa recalled that her mother insisted on driving her to school even though that meant being stuck in traffic for two hours. During the interview, Theresa was visibly moved by this memory and she noted several times how emotional she was getting just from thinking back to how her mom showed up for her. Not only did her mom verbally encourage her, but she also made it a point to always be at her activities and drive her around, which Theresa felt was an example of her mother being there for her physically. Finally, Reyna recalled moving to a new city during her senior year and convincing her mother to allow her to finish out her last year at the same high school. In order for this to happen, this meant Reyna's mother had to use a neighbor's address to take them to and from school. As Reyna remembered it:

So, we were there in Montebello and we...would still go back to...I don't know why I just didn't wanna move high schools, so this was my senior year. So, we decided to still go to...for high school. My mom would drive us from Montebello to downtown.

When I asked Reyna how long of a drive it was, she said it was about a 40-minute drive in the morning because of traffic. Having been back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico, Reyna desperately wanted to retain some stability in her life and for her, that came in the form of school. Her mother drove her there throughout the year and continued to make the commute for her younger sister who still had three years remaining at that high school. Reyna later admitted that she didn't understand the magnitude of this growing up but that with time, she has done a lot of reflection and has realized how big of a commitment that was on the part of her mom.

**Counterstory: Bi-directional support.** While parents were supportive of students, the fact remained that students also supported parents in various ways. Individual responses of support included writing checks, helping a parent study for their citizenship exam, offering bus and car navigation, making breakfast and lunch for siblings, and supporting a parent through a cancer diagnosis. Throughout their K-12 experience, four students discussed their efforts in helping to translate interactions with others as well as important documents for their parents. For example, Anahi explained:

I remember...I always had to translate for my mom with teachers, or what else was it—for work too cause oh she's also in a legal situation. She's been in one for a couple years and so she would have me translate her documents or what did they say. She took me once into a courtroom with her and her lawyer and stuff so I could translate for her.... What else? I...always have to translate for them in any space or the doctors too, I would have to go to the doctors with them.

As Anahi recalled, her translation support for her mother started at an early age in interacting with teachers. Since then, she has found herself providing support in legal and medical matters. As Yosso (2006) noted in her community cultural wealth model, students often acquire linguistic capital in going back and forth between languages, particularly Spanish. By providing linguistic support, no doubt Anahi learned at an early age how to navigate two important settings related to law and medicine.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** Though about half of the students recalled having relatively positive relationships with either one or both parents, the other half recalled having difficult relationships with either one or both parents. For the students who recalled having a difficult relationship with a parent, three out of five of their parents agreed with their perception of their relationship during K-12. The remaining two parents expressed their beliefs that they had relatively good relationships with students, while these students reflected back less

than positive interactions with their parent. For the group of students who cited positive relationships with family, Cynthia offered the following reflection:

So, I've always been really close to my family...for us, family is everything. So, especially—I mean I have a huge family. My mom has nine siblings. My dad has seven siblings. So literally we make up—just a party with my mom's family is literally maybe 80 people. And then with my dad it's another 80. So, I've always had a huge family, and we've always all been super, super close. Of course, with that many people, there will always be conflict and disagreement, but it's always a thing of well family's family so we gotta love each other. We're stuck with each other. But especially my specific family unit so my parents, my sisters, their kids, we have always been super, super, super close. So, yeah, I've always been really close with my parents.

Reflecting on her relationship with her parents, Cynthia described the relationship saying, “I’ve always been really close with my parents.” She recognized that within any family, especially one as large as hers, there can be moments of “conflict and disagreement,” but, at the end of the day, “family’s family so we gotta love each other.”

While Cynthia and other students recalled maintaining close relationships with their parents, this was not the case for the other half of students in the study. The other five students used the following words and phrases to describe their relationships with one or both of their parents, “toxic,” “didn’t care,” “constant fighting,” “didn’t talk much,” and “hard.” For three students in particular, Rosa, Nayeli, and Anahi, there was not a strong connection or semblance of a good relationship with their father. The most complicated relationship was that of Anahi and her father as she described it as “constant fighting about anything....Ninth grade year was hard because he was verbally abusive where he’d be like *O es que no sirves para nada*. [You’re useless]. *No sabes hacer nada bien*. [You don’t know how to do anything correctly]. And so, it's a lot of things that I internalized.” As I discuss in the next theme, this relationship with her father, along with difficulties with her mother, played a big role in where she decided to apply to college. For Elena, most of her complications had to do with her negative relationship with her

mother. Though Elena's mother, Señora Rodriguez, disclosed that their relationship was not the best, it was Elena who recalled specific examples of what made their relationship so difficult. As Elena explained:

...I honestly...just didn't want to be around her because she was very toxic. I felt like she was very toxic. She would scream a lot. I'll come home and it's just screaming just, blah, blah, blah, blah. Maybe some spanking here and then and yeah, I just wanted to get out of the house. It just felt really toxic.

Evident in Elena's description of the relationship was the multiple iterations of the word "toxic." As Elena described it, her mother would scream a lot and there was constant yelling that made it difficult for her to want to be at home. It also did not help that her parents were always fighting in front of her and her younger siblings, which she felt negatively impacted them. Elena later elaborated during the interview that she felt that it was very hard to connect with her mother as there was not much love or affection expressed from her mother during this time period. Elena speculated that because her mother grew up on a farm the only way she learned how to express her frustration was through yelling.

One of the challenges expressed by students was the fact that their parents could not provide them with academic support and resources to help them navigate the school system. As Reyna put it, "when I was in high school, they were just kinda like Do it on your own. Learn on your own. And we'll support you." This forced many students to be proactive and independently seek out assistance from others. Diana described what this process was like for them, "But everything else...pushing myself through classes that I was having a hard time in, I had to find...my own courage to ask my teachers for help. I had to find my resources. Everything that I learned was myself..." Diana made clear that their parents provided support in the ways that they could, but the academic part made it so that they had to push themselves to ask for help. They confessed that they felt angry with their parents early on and would think to themselves:

What? Why would you let us be poor? and Why would you not wanna find more resources for me to be as good as all these White kids cause that's what it always was. It was always me comparing myself to White kids and then as I got older, I realized it wasn't that they didn't wanna give me this support and these resources, it's that they genuinely...didn't know about them or didn't know how to give them to me.

In the beginning, Diana placed some unwarranted blame on their parents because they felt as though they were not doing enough for them to similarly compete with their White peers. As the years passed, Diana came to the realization that it was not that their parents did not want to give them the support and resources they needed to be successful. Rather, I argue, that their parents did not have the navigational and social capital (Yosso, 2006) to help them as they progressed through school. Just as students recognized that parents did not possess the navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) to help them traverse the education system, parents were also acutely aware of their limits in not being able to help students out. As Lorena emotionally recalled, "...it would be hard to talk to my parents about it cause they would feel bad because they couldn't help me [crying]." While students understood that their parents had no control over the fact that they could not provide academic support, they also expressed the struggles and frustrations that came with not being able to turn to parents for help. For Reyna, she expressed the following:

I mean my parents didn't go to college in Mexico and here, so they literally had no clue. So, when it came to high school and then doing certain assignments or things, I would try to ask my parents, but I felt upset because they didn't know anything.

While Reyna acknowledged that her parents did not go to college, this did not stop her from feeling upset that her parents could not provide her with academic support. She also later expressed her frustration with her parents for not understanding the importance of her being involved in extracurriculars. This was exacerbated by the fact that the commute to pick her up from school was already 40 minutes and her parents were not particularly keen on having to pick her up late from school. She confessed that she used to feel as though her parents were never

there for her in high school. She would often look around at her friends and other peers and compare her parents to them. She noted:

...my best friend—her mom was always in school, all the meetings. She would ask her What do you have for homework, but also her mom was a home stay mom when she was in high school. So, she would ask her, ‘What are you doing today for homework?’ and ‘Are you sure?’ I’m gonna go talk to the teacher if you’re not telling me the truth. So, her mom was very invested in her education and other parents too. Sometimes my— obviously not all my classmates—I had some where they would tell me, ‘Yeah my mom asks me for my agenda every day cause she wants to know what I’m doing for homework or she asked me if I did my homework yet and my parents would ask from time to time like, ‘You’ve done your homework right?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Okay.’ They never checked. They never did anything, and I feel like when I would tell my mom, ‘You never asked me if I had done homework. You never helped me,’ and she would tell me, ‘Well, how can I help you? I don’t know English. I don’t know the language.’ And also, she would say, ‘You’re an adult. You are growing up so if you know you’re not doing your homework then that’s your problem. And if you know you’re doing your homework than that’s good on you.’ And I never understood that, but I think she was trying to build my own discipline within me I just didn’t know. And I guess I was a teenager so I was just kinda like, ‘Why can’t my parents ask me if I’m doing homework? Why can’t my parents check my agenda and see like Hmm you’re supposed to do this....

As she recalled in the quote above, she would hear from her friends and classmates about the ways that their parents were involved in school. This often included checking in about what homework they had on their agenda and making sure they had completed it. She compared this involvement with that of her parents who only sometimes asked about her homework and never checked to make sure she had completed it. Reyna recalled confronting her mother about this, to which her mother responded that there was no way she could have helped her because she did not know English. Her mother also suggested that it was not her responsibility to make sure she was doing her homework because Reyna was becoming an adult and that it was her problem to deal with if she was not completing her homework. Though she did not understand her mother’s perspective at the time, she now saw it as her mother’s attempt at teaching her discipline.

As I mentioned earlier, students did their part to support their family. Many of them translated for their parents, though this was not without its difficulties. Rosa recalled to me:

I think in high school it was annoying to me and it was a burden but it's—because I was the only Mexican girl in my group of friends and all their parents speak the language, middle class, not immigrants, well-established, and they just live their full teenager life with no responsibilities, and I always had to—there were times where I think I remember one time my mom was getting surgery and I had to get pulled out from class so I can go help translate, and...for me that was annoying that I had to go help but at the same time...it's my mom of course, I'll do it. So, I think definitely the typical teenage era where you're like I hate it. This is so annoying.

As a teenager, Rosa did not have much interaction with her parents and spent most of her time involved in extracurricular activities. The only times she recalled interacting with her parents was when she helped to translate for them. She confessed that this process was annoying for her as a teenager because her White peers did not have to perform similar kinds of tasks for their parents since they spoke English, were middle class, and grew up in the U.S. In fact, she described her community as being predominantly white. Though it was annoying for her to have to perform these tasks, there was never any question about whether or not she would complete them because at the end of the day it was her mother. Similarly, Anahi described how hard it was for her to translate for her parents in legal and medical situations because it required a very specific understanding of terminology. She stated:

She took me once into a courtroom with her and her lawyer and stuff so I could translate for her. And so, then I had to do that as well, which gets really hard. Because I don't want to say the wrong thing. And then I don't know some of the legal terms or what it means as well. So, then that's really hard. What else? I...always have to translate for them in any space or the doctors too I would have to go to the doctors with them and then translate what the doctor was saying to them, and that's hard too because I don't even know... how to express it or say it, so I would have to look at Google Translate or find other ways to say it as well.

For Anahi, the most difficult part of translating was not knowing exactly how to translate legal and medical information. She expressed being concerned that she would “say the wrong thing” so she often utilized Google Translate to help better communicate information across her mother

and doctors. She continued to elaborate about the difficulty of communicating information across parties:

I've always found myself in situations where I'm in a triangle between this person's trying to tell ME something in English to tell them, but my parents are yelling at ME to tell them something. And then they're like, what are they saying? And I'm like, everyone, calm down I can't do all of this....And so then that always gets hard when it's a three-way situation because everyone's asking of something from me and I can't focus just on one conversation. And my parents are the type that are always like ¿Que esta diciendo? ¿Que esta diciendo? And they...keep asking questions I'm like but you don't let me answer you so let me first finish this conversation then tell you. So that's been some of the hard things.

The challenging part for Anahi was being the only one who knew how to communicate in both English and Spanish. Because of this, she would have one person telling her something in English while also receiving questions from her parents about what the person said in English. With people talking at her from all sides, it was hard for Anahi to focus on what was being said. As such, she often had to remind her parents to let her finish her first conversation before answering their questions.

### **Familial-Student Relationship**

Some of the same examples of support and involvement on the part of parents were also displayed by other family members. Siblings were the most influential in providing support with additional support provided by cousins, grandparents, and a tío.

**Counterstory: Instrumental sibling support.** Students expressed that their siblings were instrumental in providing emotional, financial, and moral support. One additional support that older siblings in particular were able to pass along to students was navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) and the academic support they were able to provide, something that parents were unable to do. Older siblings could relate to what students were going through and most were proactive in passing along their acquired knowledge to students. This was very much the case for



Sara and Esmeralda, the older sisters of Cynthia and Rosa respectively. Given the age difference between Sara and Cynthia, Sara recalled taking on both a sister and mother role in her relationship with Cynthia. From her respective:

[Cynthia] because she was younger and she was—she’s also the same age as my son, it was very easy to just kinda take her in as a pseudo daughter you know and so we would have her and my son sitting at home doing homework and we had homework days.”

Sara took this role very seriously and was always encouraging both her son and Cynthia to complete their homework. When Cynthia was younger, Sara was finishing up her undergraduate degree and the three of them would have homework days. Thus, Cynthia received both verbal (do your homework) and nonverbal (sitting down and modeling doing homework) support for her academics. Sara mentioned that she encouraged Cynthia to ask questions in class and become involved in extracurricular activities. Cynthia similarly recalled Sara’s efforts during K-12 “So yeah I feel like growing up, she was kinda like my second mom and I feel like she served as—maybe my parents couldn’t really be there for me academically as much, but she was always there....” While Cynthia’s parents could not help her academically, Sara was able to step up in their place and guide her. Esmeralda, Rosa’s sister, also provided a great deal of support and encouragement as Rosa navigated high school. Esmeralda recalled her and her younger sister encouraging Rosa to seek out leadership opportunities and involve herself in extracurriculars because they knew this would make her a competitive applicant for college.

....we did push [Rosa] to take AP classes in high school, to ask for help. We got her an English tutor so can help her with her essays, so we did little things like that to help her build her academics.

Having gone through the high school and college process herself, Esmeralda passed on this navigational and familial capital (Yosso, 2006) to her sister. Specifically, she encouraged Rosa to take AP classes and excel in other classes in order to “build her academics.” Given that

Esmeralda did not have the most ideal environment for her to work in when she was younger, she made it a point to encourage her parents to do things differently that would promote a much more productive environment at home for Rosa. She stated:

...I feel like growing up in a household where school it's—we don't—my parents don't really understand school, it was hard to create that environment for [Rosa] to focus on her homework. For example, don't be loud in the house. Let [Rosa] go to sleep. You know what I mean? Creating that environment for her [emphasis] because I know that it was gonna help her with her studying and her doing better but it was...kinda like a constant battle between going how can I help her but how can I control the environment at home with my parents in asking them for quiet time, asking them for hours we can just sit and do homework and don't have the TV on or the music loud because you know Latinos we love...we like to listen to music pretty loud.

Growing up, Esmeralda recalled that her parents did not understand what it meant to be in school. As such, she was vocal in suggesting small things her parents could do around the house such as having quiet time with no TV or music or just time to “sit and do homework.” Rosa confirmed that Esmeralda and her other sister stepped up when her parents could not help. She stated:

And I always—so in the parts that my mom and dad couldn't fill in as a parent, my sisters usually did. So, checking my report cards in high school. I graduated with a 3.5 which now I know that it's not that bad, but back then I thought it was the worst GPA because my sisters were so hard on me. So, they were always like Why don't you have an A? You should be having an A. Why do you have a B- you know things like that, which is true you're in high school, it's not hard, you know. But I think they definitely...they pushed me until the point where I didn't need the push anymore.

Rosa recalled her sisters having high expectations for her to excel academically in high school which meant expecting her to receive A's. She continued:

I think academically, it was definitely my sisters' push cause they were always up my alley asking me about my grades. They were always asking me, When's your next test? Let me see your notes. Things like that. And I think they did that because they realized that they didn't have that when they were in high school, and they wish they would've had that coming out later so it's like I feel like they started doing that with me just so they—they wanted me to do better than they did, which I—it's also another typical, you know, I want you to do better [than] I will do type of thing.

Rosa's sisters were very academically involved in her grades and always asked questions about her classes and checked in about exams. As she noted in the quote, she believed that her sisters were involved in her schoolwork to the extent that they were because they themselves had not experienced that when they were going through high school. She also recognized that they had high aspirations and expectations for her to do better than they did, a common theme also present in parents' narratives and across generations. This same process was true for those students in the study who were the oldest in their family. For example, when I asked Reyna how her family in supported her, she mentioned that having a younger sister encouraged her to do well in school because she needed to set an example and graduate. She elaborated:

...younger siblings always look at you. They always look at what you're doing and they wanna do it. So I knew that if I don't graduate high school, statistically that would lower her chances for graduating high school so I was like no I need to show her that if I can do it, she can do it even better than me—and which she did. She graduated with a higher GPA than I did, and she was very involved.

This idea of being a positive role model and wanting their younger siblings to aspire to do even greater things than them was common among other students such as Diana, Elena, and Karen. These students held high aspirations for their younger siblings and believed that all of the knowledge they gained could be used to help their siblings earlier on in the process so they would not have to suffer in the same ways they did. This highlights just one of the ways that students utilized their navigational, social, and familial capital (Yosso, 2006) to impress upon their younger siblings the importance of obtaining an education and show them the steps they needed to take to get there. Students believed that their younger siblings would presumably have much more of an advantage than they did because would receive this knowledge earlier on in their educational experiences.

**Counterstory: Extended family support.** In addition to siblings, two students mentioned the support they received from other family members. For Reyna, her grandparents provided a tremendous amount of support. Having grown up near her grandparents when she lived in Mexico, and later raised by them for several years while her parents were migrant workers in the U.S., she had a very special bond with her grandparents. In fact, she called them “mamá” [mom] y [and] “papá” [dad]. Living with her grandparents, her grandmother would walk her to school, read to her, and help her with homework, even though she had not received more than a middle school education. She also recalled her grandparents supporting her financially and through food. Once she was back in the U.S., she recalled speaking with them on a weekly basis and then twice a month during high school.

Finally, Anahi recalled her tío and cousins as family members who provided important levels of support. With regard to her tío, she described him as motivating her to think more positively. She recalled receiving the following consejos [advice] from him:

But what he does do—what he's good at—motivating...I'd be like, O tío no lo entiendo a esto [Oh uncle I don't understand this] and then he—he's good at math. He's very smart that's the thing, but he doesn't work. And so, then he'd be like, Es que tienes que tomarte un descanso porque tu...cerebro esta cansado ahorita entonces toma un descanso y luego regresas y luego vas a ver qua vas entenderle [It's because you have to take a break because your...brain is tired now so take and break and then come back and you'll see that you'll understand it] and then I would do that, and I was like Oh you're right. And then—or he would tell me other things...I would say stuff like O es que no lo puedo hacer [Oh it's because I can't do it] and he's like No, no digas esas cosas [No, no don't say those things] he's like nunca digas cosas negativas porque luego vas a traer cosas negativas a tu vida [don't ever say negative things because then you're going to bring negative things in your life]. Yeah, he'd be like only say positive things like I can do it like why are you being so negative like never—and like I remember there was one time where he did not want to hear me be negative, like O es que no puedo. [Oh it's because I can't do it] Every time, I would say that, he would get angry. And I was like, Oh, no. And so, he's very you can do anything you set your mind to...you have that willpower. And so, I appreciated that as well...

Her tío was very encouraging and supportive and a good motivating force in her life. When she would express frustration at not being able to understand something, he would say all she needed to do was give her mind a little rest and then come back to it and she would likely understand it. Any time she doubted her abilities, he was always there to remind her to not think negative thoughts and that she could do anything she set her mind to. Additionally, her cousins were a great source of support as well given that they grew up together and were very close to one another. She described their relationship as, "...it was just always a good time to have with them and I knew I could talk to them about if I was struggling in school or whatever I was going through." Her cousins served as a source of emotional support.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** Though the majority of students with older siblings expressed having a positive and close relationship with them, this was not the case for two students. As Nayeli put it, "...we didn't have that close relationship me and my sister growing up in high school." Nayeli's sister Victoria also agreed with that assessment. In Victoria's words, "...at that time we were both invested in our friends, in our own clique. We didn't really hang out as often." Diana had an even tougher relationship with their older sister who would not associate herself with them and asked that they not mention that they were siblings. Given this relationship with their sister, Diana vowed to have a different relationship with their younger brother. As the oldest sister, Elena described being annoyed at her younger siblings because of the age gap and commented on the difficulty of having a relationship with them given their age. Even with her sister closest to her in age, Elena described having a difficult relationship with her due to the fact that their mother would always speak highly of Elena yet look down at her sister. She felt that this was one of the reasons her sister distanced herself from her. Finally, Nayeli described a very challenging relationship with her grandparents, whom she

described as very strict and overprotective. She had a particularly difficult relationship with her grandmother whom she was fearful of.

### **College Search and Decision-Making Process**

#### **Community College**

Of the 10 participants, four students started their higher education journeys directly at a community college. One additional student began at a four-year institution but left after one quarter and later enrolled in community college. Across all participants' recollections, the decision to attend a community college was a direct result of circumstances in students' lives that left them with community college as the best option to pursue higher education. Factors contributing to their enrollment in community college included a rescission of a four-year acceptance, "a traumatic senior year," encouragement by siblings, not knowing one needed to apply to college, and experiencing a traumatic first quarter at a four-year university.

When considering which community college to apply to, students' vocalized proximity to home or work as important factors. Four out of the five students continued to prioritize this when ultimately deciding which community college to attend. Furthermore, all five students individually made the decision about which community college they were going to attend and simply informed their parents of their decision without much of a conversation. For example, as Señora Garcia recalled telling Karen:

Mamaíta le digo yo por eso pregúntele usted a sus maestros porque ellos deben de saber y ellos deben de guiar. Yo sé que un maestro debe de guiar a sus alumnos por buen camino y entonces como le digo Mamaíta...que puedo decirle yo que tan feo, si yo no se nada. [I tell her mamaíta that's why you have to ask your teachers because they should know and should be able to guide. I know that a teacher must guide their students on the right track and like I tell her mamaíta...how can I tell her how bad, when I don't know anything].

Recognizing that she could not give Karen advice about which schools to look into, Señora Garcia encouraged her to reach out to teachers who she believed would be able to guide Karen

“on the right track” in terms of college related advice. Because the parents of these five students were unaware of what colleges actually existed, they did not have specific opinions about where students should attend. As Karen recalled, “...in regards to the support of saying...you have to go here, you have to do that, we didn’t have that.” Rather, the messages Karen received from her parents were more so “get wherever you want to go and whatever you want to be and then they’re going to be there kind of thing.”

While most parents were not involved in the process of choosing a school, one student, Reyna, did recall asking her father to drive her to visit two community colleges. One of the community colleges she chose to visit had a very good reputation for students transferring into four-year universities. She recalled the drive taking them about an hour and her father expressing concern about how far it would be from home via public transportation. Upon arriving to the admissions office, she described having a rude encounter with a staff member and immediately feeling as if she did not belong there. She told her father that she did not know what to do and he suggested that she look at other schools. After searching on google for community colleges in the area, she stumbled upon one located about 12 minutes by car. Her father suggested that she enroll there instead, as it would be easy for her to commute via bus. Her father took her on a campus visit and she immediately felt welcomed by the staff and decided to enroll.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** As the only student of this group to have older siblings, Rosa recalled feeling as though her decision to attend community college was due to her sisters’ guidance. She remembered:

And then they kind of decided for me to go to community college, cause I remember when the SAT's were coming along, I was like, Do I have to take that? I remember asking them and they were like No you don't have to take it cause you're going to community college, and I was like Oh okay cool, one less test for me. So, I didn't take it.

Yet, when I asked Rosa's older sister, Esmeralda, why she believed her sister chose to go the community college route after high school, Esmeralda stated the following:

I think it's because [Rosa] didn't really know what she liked. I feel like she felt...pressure from us to do well in school. So, I feel she was just focused on doing well in school instead of focusing on what she likes. So, I feel like she didn't really know what she liked.

Comparing the two quotes of Rosa and Esmeralda above, it is clear that the two sisters have varying perspectives on the subject. Interestingly, Esmeralda never discussed advising Rosa to not take the SATs.

I now discuss the challenges faced by Nayeli, Reyna, and Theresa to provide further context as to what led them to the community college system. Nayeli was an athlete and straight A student in high school who had been in the process of applying to several four-year universities. That all quickly changed after she described having a "traumatic senior year" that involved her mom moving out of state, her brother attempting suicide, and family secrets revealed about her sister's true biological father coming to light during their parents' divorce proceedings. Nayeli recalled missing the deadline to apply to UC institutions and having to finish her last two weeks of senior year at a continuation school in order for her to receive her diploma. Though she missed the UC deadline, she recalled being uncertain about whether or not she had completed her CSU application. She found out after the fact that she had been awarded financial aid at three CSUs, but to her knowledge, she never was notified of having been accepted into any of the institutions. After graduating from high school, she became pregnant with her daughter and soon became a single mother shortly after. When she reached out to her grandparents to ask if she could move in with them, their one condition for her was that she had to work and go to school. While working at a Jamba Juice, she realized that as a single mother she would need to get an education to be able to financially provide for her daughter and made the decision to



enroll in community college. On the other hand, Reyna did in fact meet the UC and CSU application deadlines. While she did not get into her dream school, she did have a few CSUs to choose from and ultimately decided to enroll in one that was closest to her. At first, there was an issue with her needing to pay \$2300, which was further complicated by the fact that she learned her financial aid would not be disbursed until a few months after classes were set to start. The only person in her extended family who had the means to help them was her father's uncle, whom he had grown up with in his youth. Though she described his uncle as always having been stingy, her father still went ahead and asked his uncle and, to their surprise, he agreed to let them borrow the money on the condition that Reyna would pay him back when her financial aid came in. With one hurdle out of the way, she did not anticipate any other problems that would prevent her from beginning in the fall. That all changed when she was informed that her admission had been revoked because she had not passed an English class that she had needed to fulfill before starting in the fall. Reyna recalled being so confused by the process and commented that she had never seen an email or a notice alerting her of this requirement. She stated that as a first-generation student, the process of accessing a student portal was so foreign to her and something that she even struggled with as a student at WCU. She knew that her only option was to enroll in community college, but recalled the stigma surrounding that decision. As such, she made a vow that she would make the most out of the situation and do her best so that she could get into her dream school.

During her senior year, Theresa applied to both UCs and CSUs and ultimately decided to attend the closest UC that she had gained admission to which also happened to be the one that provided her the most aid. She described her experience there as “brutal” and “really bad.” During this time, she had no friends and frequently expressed that this time period was “very

dark” for her. She further described that her mental health had never been as bad as it was then, and she left “totally depressed.” Theresa eventually withdrew at the end of fall quarter feeling jaded about education. She found her way to community college as a result of the support she received from a friend who essentially informed her that they would be enrolling in classes. She struggled greatly during this time and accumulated many withdrawals. Theresa described the four to five years she spent at that community college as unfocused and was forced to transfer to a different community college after having exhausted her financial aid at the first one. The second community college she enrolled in was much closer to her work as well as her mother’s work. From the beginning, she found institutional support through various individuals on campus and turned her grades around over the next two years before attending her dream school, WCU.

### **Transferring from Community College to a Four-Year University**

Similar to when they first applied to community college, the five students who entered community college and transferred to a four-year university continued to prioritize proximity to home as important factors guiding their decisions on where to apply. All but one, continued to prioritize this through their final decision of where to attend. For Reyna and Nayeli, staying close to home was particularly important for them for different reasons. As she contemplated her option of moving away from home to attend an equally prestigious school, Reyna came to the realization that she was not going to be able to be with or see her family often. She thought about her anxiety and the panic attacks she often experienced and wondered, “Who’s gonna calm me down? I’m gonna be completely on my own.” At the time, she had also started a new relationship with her boyfriend, who she has since married, and did not want to be far away from him. As such, she settled on staying closer to home because in her eyes “it’s a perfect way to distance myself from my family but be with them the same day if I need something.” For Nayeli,

her ultimate reason for staying close to home was wanting to make sure that her daughter was around family. Because of her daughter, additional motivating factors influencing Nayeli's decision of where to apply and attend involved availability and hours of childcare, availability of family housing, and cost of attendance. As a student with a dependent, she was able to fight for a full ride to attend WCU. At least two other students cited cost as an additional factor that they considered.

Furthermore, this transfer process saw much of the same individual decision making about which universities to apply to and attend. However, one student, Reyna, talked about the importance of involving her parents in the process of applying to schools, something she did not engage in the first time around when she had originally applied to four-year universities. She recalled:

The second time around, I told them—I would tell them this is my plan. I'm gonna apply this time. So...I had a very structured plan...even my dad I told him I'm gonna start applying... so I made them a little bit more part of it, give them more information because at that point I knew too a lot. I knew exactly what choosing each school meant and what program I wanted to go in and I even told them about the prep classes for each major and I would communicate those things. And my parents didn't really have a say, but I think once...I mean my mom would tell me choose something close. Para que te vas hasta allá? [Why are you going all the way over there?] Don't go over there but if you really want to and then I support you. And my dad it was the same Yeah go wherever you want. If you wanna go there cause it's number one, you deserve to be in the number one university.

As a first-generation student, Reyna had no prior knowledge about what it meant to apply to college and was unable to involve her parents in the college application process the first time around. This time around, applying as a community college transfer student, Reyna had gained the navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) to be able to share her knowledge and understanding of the college going process with her parents. Common across other students was this notion that “parents didn't really have a say” or that students' decisions were not highly influenced by their

parents as was mentioned in the above quote by Reyna. Though this was the case, some students recalled parents who gave no opinion about where to attend and some had parents who expressed a desire for students to stay close to home. Even among the latter parents, there was this understanding that they would still continue to support students' decisions to attend school far away if that was what they really wanted. As was evident in the quote above, Reyna's mother did not understand why she would want to attend school far away but expressed her support no matter what decision she made. Additionally, Reyna revealed that her boyfriend, now husband, also stated that she should go wherever she wanted to go, but that he really wanted her to attend WCU, which is where he had been attending. Meanwhile, Señor Hernandez's main message to Reyna was "go wherever you want." Similar to Señora Hernandez's message, Theresa commented that her mother did not express any opinions about where she should attend as it was not in her nature. Additionally, she believed her mother might have been concerned about expressing her opinions only for Theresa to one day feel resentment towards her or hold it against her. When I asked another mother, Señora Garcia, as to whether she would have supported her daughter Karen if she had chosen to go to Berkeley, she replied:

Mire seño si se van a esos ciertos lugares en mi posibilidad ella sabe que nuestro trabajo de mi esposo y el mío es muy de bajo recursos. Entonces yo se que allí apenas le dan no se si un año que les ayuda pues a pagar a estar ella en ese colegio y ya pues tiene que salir ella alquilar un apartamento. Entonces no teníamos esa posibilidad seño de pagar. Entonces yo allí no la hubiera apoyado...y por eso yo siempre las apoyo aquí cerquitas mis hijas le digo porque no tenemos la posibilidad de seguirles pagando apartamentos porque así pueden viajar a nuestro apartamento y entonces no allí sí no las apoyaría seño. [Look ma'am if they go to those certain places in my possibility, she knows that my husband's and my work is very low income. So, I know there they barely give I don't know if it's one year to pay for her to be there in that college and then after that she has to go out and rent an apartment. So, we didn't have the means to pay ma'am. So me, there, I would not have been able to support her...and that's why I always support my daughters here close by because we don't have the means to keep paying apartments because this way they can come to our apartment and so no there I would have not have been able to support them ma'am].

Though I had asked Señora Garcia whether she would support her daughter's decision to attend a school far away, it was clear from her quote that she understood support to mean financial support as opposed to support in the form of encouragement. This was confirmed when she mentioned that she and her husband did not have the financial resources to afford to pay for Karen to have an apartment. She also mentioned that having Karen close by meant that she was able to support her much more (e.g., letting her live at home rent free).

Finally, two of the five students described sharing their acceptances with their parents. Theresa recalled telling her mother that she would be receiving her admissions decision from WCU and asked her to wait up so they could find out together. She recalled the following memory:

She was crying. She knocked out. I was like *Espérate porque va salir hoy* [Wait, because it's going to come out today] the you know but when I went into her room she was knocked the hell out. She called her boss and... I was like, They don't care you know, but she's like I gotta let everyone know that you got in. It's a tremendous—I don't know it was just—I'm overwhelmed with emotion now even think[ing] about it...

After waking her mother up, Theresa shared the news that she had been accepted into WCU. She remembered her mother crying and being so excited about the news that she called her employers to let them know that she had gotten in. As you may recall from earlier in this chapter, when Theresa was around six or seven years of age, she had gone with her mother to work and saw a white coat with the university's name written on it. From that moment on, it became her dream to attend WCU. Reyna similarly recalled finding out one of her acceptances while she was at a transfer event at WCU with her father. She remembered finding out during the middle of a workshop that she had been accepted into Berkeley, the school she had dreamt of going to since high school and who also denied her when she first applied her senior year. She remembered showing her father, Señor Hernandez, the decision and the confetti that appeared alongside her

acceptance. At the time, she had already known about her acceptance to WCU and was waiting to hear back about Berkeley. It was in that moment with her father that she decided to attend WCU.

As I previously mentioned, Rosa was the only student within this group of transfer students who had older siblings. During the transfer application process, she recalled her sisters helping her with the applications. Her oldest sister, Esmeralda, mentioned encouraging Rosa to apply to many schools, including those which she thought she might not get into. She noted:

...I feel like she was underestimating herself. So, when she was applying, we told her make sure you apply to Berkeley as well or apply to [WCU]. I feel like you have a strong application. I think she was gonna apply to [WCU], but we also told her to apply to... some other schools and then she was like Oh, I don't think I can get accepted in those schools and we were like Just apply and then she got accepted. So, I feel like part of [Rosa]she underestimated herself, but I don't know. We pushed her a little bit and just apply and then she got accepted and when she decided to go [WCU], she had other really good options that [WCU] was just not her only option.

Esmeralda recalled feeling as though Rosa had underestimated the strength of her application as well as her own abilities and purposefully pushed Rosa to apply to many schools. As a result, Rosa had many good options to choose from.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** With the exception of one student, most students did not bring up tensions, challenges, or contradictions with their parents as they applied as transfer students to four-year universities. For Karen, the challenge came when she told her parents she had been accepted into WCU. She remembered:

...I was crying when I got my acceptance letters, because I didn't think I was gonna get in. And they were like—I guess...I think their thought was like, okay, you applied to the school and you're automatically in kind of thing. So, for a while it was hard for them to understand how important this was for me.

Knowing how difficult it was to get into WCU, Karen was overcome with emotion when she found out she had been accepted. However, her parents were unaware of how big of an

accomplishment this was since they did not fully understand the U.S. higher education system. She later shared with me that she had to tell her parents that it was the number one school and that she could not do any better than this. Though Reyna never mentioned any challenges with her parents during this process, her father, Señor Hernandez, mentioned not realizing how difficult it was to get into college. Before witnessing Reyna go through the process of applying to four-year universities twice, Señor Hernandez believed:

Mira yo pensaba que era un poquito mas fácil...no sabes realmente todo lo difencil que es para llegar a una universidad. Yo lo veía pues fácil. Yo pensaba que nada mas con el hecho de que ellos tuvieran buenas calificaciones las iban aceptar, pero hay mas procesos que hacer y pues ahora las cosas yo la veo...[Look, I thought that it was a little bit easier...you don't really know how difficult it is to get to a university. I saw it as, well, easy. I thought that simply with the fact that they had good grades they would accept them, but there are more processes to do and well now I see things...].

Señor Hernandez thought that the process of applying to college was much easier than he had realized. It was not until he saw Reyna go through the process two different times that he realized it was more than just having good grades.

A second difficulty experienced during this process was that of Rosa who had many disagreements with her sister Esmeralda about which university to attend. Rosa remembered learning about her acceptance to WCU and both sisters being excited for her and congratulating her with balloons. Yet, that all changed when she received her acceptance into Berkeley. Her sisters quickly changed their tune and told Rosa she had to go to Berkeley. Esmeralda also recalled the family argument that ensued and expressed that everyone in her family wanted Rosa to choose Berkeley. Choosing which university to attend also meant choosing between different majors. Rosa recalled the following about her sisters:

...I feel like...they have tried to influence my life and academics a little bit too much to the point where it was my sister didn't want me to come to [WCU]. They wanted me to go to Berkeley because at all the other UCs that I got accepted to, I got into as international relations and then here is the only place I got in for Chicano/Chicana

Studies, but they also still have the stigma that like, What the fuck are you gonna do with a—sorry—with a degree with Ethnic Studies.

Rosa recalled feeling as though her sisters “tried to influence [her] life and academics a little bit too much.” One of the main points of contention was whether Rosa would be an international relations major at Berkeley, or a Chicano/a Studies major at WCU. It was very clear for Rosa that Esmeralda looked down upon the latter major. Though Esmeralda made no mention about Rosa’s major, she did report being concerned about the career opportunities available to her after graduation. From Esmeralda’s perspective, there would be more opportunities to do internships in the Bay Area. Rosa eventually called on her mother to intervene because she felt that her sisters had been trying to pressure her into going to Berkeley. Her mother did in fact intervene and she recalled:

...my mom stood up for me. She's like you will not tell [Rosa] where she wants to go to college cause no one told you where you were gonna go when you decided, so you're not gonna do the same for her. So, don't even—I don't wanna hear it again. And my mom stood up for me. She's like She's gonna go wherever she wants. You can't decide that.

With this blessing and intervention from her mother, Rosa recalled telling her sisters, “You're not going to dictate where I [emphasis] am going to go to school. I am gonna go wherever I want.” It was at that point that she decided to attend WCU.

### **Four-year University**

Of the students who participated in the study, eight of them applied directly to four-year universities after graduating from high school. Though accepted into four-year universities, two of these eight students (Nayeli and Reyna) ended up not enrolling and instead went the community college route. Furthermore, one of the eight students (Theresa) did enroll and attend a four-year university but only did so for one quarter before withdrawing and later enrolling in a community college.



Similar to the students who transferred from community college to a four year, this group of students highlighted proximity to home and cost of attendance as important factors that influenced where they applied and where they decided to enroll. As such, a majority of the schools students applied to were either local or within a close enough proximity to home that they could go back if they needed to. As Lorena recalled:

I wanted to live away, but also not that far, where...I could still go home reasonably and they can come visit me cause...this is me just trying to slowly transition into that adulthood where I'm like I can do stuff on my own, and you don't really need to worry about me like that.

For Lorena, it was about finding that sweet spot in terms of distance where it was important for her to remain close by in case she wanted to go back home, or her family wanted to visit her. Since she had always been with her family, she felt very strongly that it was time for her to become independent and do things on her own. This distance was also important for Lorena in terms of wanting to live on campus. She described having a conversation with her cousin where she learned that she commuted from home to school via public transportation and a car. Lorena recognized that this would be too much to deal with, especially considering that she did not know how to drive nor did she trust buses. Theresa similarly wanted to remain close to home. She confessed:

I think that's why I didn't apply to any outside—any out of state schools because I knew I wanna stay in proximity to my family....I knew I didn't want to leave away which is why I didn't do—I wasn't gonna get into Berkeley but I was like I'm not even gonna try you know....And I think because I needed to be centered by my family and even today, I'm 25, and I'm an RA, and I'm pretty self-sufficient in many regards, I still need to be with my family. I need to be grounded in every single way...

Knowing how important her family was to her, Theresa limited her options to what was around her and located in close proximity to her family, particularly her mother.

Given that a majority of students grew up low-income, they knew that their parents would not be able to help them with tuition. As such, it was important for them to apply to schools that could offer the most financial assistance. For most students, this meant applying to in state institutions at the CSU and UC level. Though Diana had anticipated applying to out of state schools, they “didn’t realize how much more expensive being out of state was” and decided to focus their efforts on UC schools. On the other hand, Anahi believed that because she was low-income, private schools would offer her more money, so she opted to apply to schools on the East Coast to at least compare the financial aid packages. Though she was accepted into many schools, her decision was between attending Smith College and WCU. When Anahi realized that she would have only had to take out \$3,000 in loans each year to attend Smith College compared to the \$10,000 she was expected to pay at WCU each year, she sat down with her parents to discuss that Smith presented the best option for her. In response, Anahi’s parents expressed that they supported her decision. Upon visiting the East Coast and visiting Smith College, she realized that it was too White for her and wanted to be close to home if anything were to ever happen. Still, the solidifying factor for her came when she was awarded the Gates Millennium Scholarship which would cover her undergraduate expenses at whichever college she attended. With money no longer an issue, the decision to attend WCU was solidified.

**Keeping parents in the loop.** Across the board, the majority of students in this group kept their parents informed about the fact that they were applying to universities. In this way, students kept parents in the loop and leaned on their social networks to help with the application process. For the most part, parents were very supportive of students’ decisions to apply to the schools of their choice. As Elena’s mother, Señora Rodriguez, put it, “Esta bien. Donde tu quieras hija.” [It’s fine. Wherever you want to go my daughter]. In another example, Lorena

recalled her father, Señor Hernandez, tell her , “Do what you need to do. It's your choice.”

Because I knew that many of these students were accepted into prestigious schools that were not close to home, I asked parents whether or not they would have supported students if they had chosen to go there instead. Every parent commented that they would have supported students no matter what decision they made. Anahi’s mother, Señora Montellano, told me:

Pues ella quería irse para—si la aceptaban se quería ir para Maine. Aha. Y de hecho fue a visitar la universidad. Fue y...la escuela verdad le pagó todo verdad...fue a visitar la de Maine y fue a visitar otro universidad que no me acuerdo cual fue, por allá lejos también.... Fue a dos universidades. Y ella me decía que porque se quería ir lejos estudiar. Entonces yo decía Okay le decía por lo que tu quieras. Porque yo nunca me he querido meter en tomar las decisiones yo, ni decirle, ni aconsejarle porque yo siempre pensado que, si le llegue ir mal, va decir que por mi culpa. [Well, she wanted to leave to—if they accepted her, she wanted to go to Maine. Aha. In fact, she went to visit the university. She went and the school paid for everything...she went to visit the one in Maine and she went to visit another university that I can’t remember which one it was, somewhere over there far away too. She went to two universities. And she would tell me that she wanted to go far away to study. So, I would tell her Okay whatever you want. Because I never have wanted to interfere in her decision making or tell her, or advise her, because I’ve always thought that if it were to ever go badly for her, she would say it was my fault].

Anahi was one of about three students who had expressed serious interest in attending an out of state school. Anahi was honest with her parents that if she was accepted into one of these schools, she would more than likely attend. In response, Señora Montellano remembered telling Anahi that she was on board with whatever she wanted to do. She also cited a hesitancy to influence her daughter in the decision-making process because she feared that if it went badly, Anahi would later blame her for it. As you may recall, this same sentiment was expressed by Theresa in the previous section of community college transfer students.

**Counterstory: Pick somewhere close, but if not, I’ll still support you.** Though parents were supportive, it was also true that many of them expressed their desire for students to pick a

school that was close to home. This was true for six out of the eight students. When Lorena found out she got into Berkeley, her mother told her:

That's really far [whispers] and they're like...I don't want you to hold back. If you wanna go, go, but keep in mind we won't be able to really visit you like that because you'll be far and it's a six-hour drive and then they're like, we can't really use the plane, you would have to get on the plane...if that's something you're thinking about.

Lorena's mother did not want to hold her back and expressed that she would support Lorena if she decided to go to Berkeley. At the same time, she made it clear that the distance was too far and that they would not be able to visit her. Though it is unclear whether there were immigration or financial reasons behind not being able to get on a plane, the same sentiment was also expressed by Elena's mother, Señora Rodriguez. She noted:

Mhm. Si hablábamos. No mas le decía Hija, por favor no te vayas ir lejos [laughs]. ¿Por que mami?...dije porque pos no tenemos papeles. Si tu te vas a Nueva York, no podemos volar hasta allá. Si te vas a Washington no podemos volar hasta allá. Considéralo le digo Sea un poquito consiente que pos si te presenta la oportunidad aquí, pues aquí tómala le digo y si dios quiere le digo pues aquí vas a salir adelante hija. No ocupas de irte lejos le decía yo. Le decía no ocupas de irte lejos. Y ya le llegó—cuando empezó de las aplicaciones a las universidades, le llegó una de Nueva York. Le digo Ay dios mío santo...Mami yo me tengo que ir. Déjame volar. Déjame—le digo Yo se hija, pero considera lo que pos no tenemos papeles. [Mhm. We would talk about it. I would only tell her Daughter, please don't go far away. Why not mom...I said because we don't have papers. If you go to New York, we can't fly there. If you go to Washington, we can't fly there. I tell her consider it, be a little bit conscious that if the opportunity presents itself here, well, then take it and if God allows it, you will get ahead here daughter. I would tell her don't worry about going far. I would tell her don't worry about going far. And she received—when she started college applications, she got one from New York. I say Oh my Holy God...Mom I have to go. Let me fly. Let me—I tell her I know daughter but consider that well, we don't have papers.

As Señora Rodriguez made clear, she would not be able to fly out and visit Elena in New York or Washington or wherever required her to take a plane because she was not a U.S. citizen. She pleaded with Elena to think her decision through and not go far away.

Eso es un obstáculo para uno el no tener papeles. El estar aquí atado. El estar encadenado ósea que no, no se puede. Okay mami dice voy considerar, pero dice a ver que. Y ya le llegó una de la Stanford se llama Stanford por allá por San Francisco. Y era en tiempo de

que no se si te diste cuenta tu que andaban que la migra, que la redadas y todo eso. Mami no me voy a ir dice porque por allá también dicen que hay mucha migra dice. Vamos a esperar otras respuestas. [For one, not having papers is an obstacle. Being tied here. Being chained that is, no, no you can't do it. She says Okay, mom. I'll consider it, but we'll see. And then she got one from Stanford, it's called Stanford over there by San Francisco. And this was during the time when, I don't know if you realized this, but ICE was over there, the raids, and all of that. She says Mom, I'm not going to go because over there there's also a lot of ICE. Let's wait to hear back for other responses].

She described how challenging it was to not have her papers, a feeling of being “encadenado” [chained] and “atado” [stuck]. It was clear that this resonated with Elena because after receiving her acceptance to Stanford, she expressed no desire to go over there. At the time, Elena had heard a lot about ICE officials conducting raids in San Francisco and chose to wait to see where else she got in. As the daughter of undocumented Latino parents, national policies related to immigration and citizenship represented larger structures of oppression that Elena was forced to contend with. Finally, no parents were as vocal about a student staying close to home as much as Cynthia's parents. When Cynthia told her mother that she had applied to NYU, her mother said, “...Oh, hija no. No, you can't go that far. We're gonna move too.” Cynthia's parents pleaded that she not apply to NYU or any other school that was “drastically far.” She even recalled her mother telling her, “...you can't go somewhere north more because the fault line is there and earthquakes. You could die.” Choosing WCU was a happy medium for her parents because it was not too far, and they could still make the drive if they wanted to. Still, that did not stop her parents from suggesting that they could move to where Cynthia was. She recalled:

When I came to [WCU]—here's a funny story—when I came to [WCU], my dad called me and he goes, Do you know if they have any jobs for gardeners or janitors at [WCU]? We'll move. And I was like, Dad, please [laughs]. I'm literally three hours away. He was like We'll move right now. I was like it's okay, it's okay.

Being that Cynthia was the youngest, it was evident that her parents had a hard time letting her leave the nest. I will detail in the next section how influential Cynthia's older sisters were in

mediating and convincing their mother that Cynthia needed to leave. I should note that for the nine students who decided to stay relatively close to home, this decision was more about what they wanted as opposed to a reflection of their parents' desires for them to stay close by.

**Counterstory: Parental Support.** While parents were unable to engage students in conversations about which colleges to apply to, how to frame their application materials, or what college would be like, they were mostly supportive of students throughout the college application process. A couple of students mentioned receiving a lot of encouragement and emotional support from their parents during this time. According to Cynthia:

...my parents couldn't...help me write this essay, proofread my essay, they couldn't do that part. But even I just get home be like Ugh I'm exhausted. I have to finish this. They were just very encouraging like You can do it. So—I mean and that helps too, and I think that plays a big role too, not necessarily doing the work to help me complete the app or whatever but even just being a support that like We're here for you. You got this...

Though her parents could not help her with the technical details of applying to college, Cynthia recalled her parent's constant encouragement, which she believed played a big role during an exhausting time period. She later elaborated in the interview:

I think for my parents, it was more they would ask me and then they would get so proud and they'd just want to tell the whole world. So, my dad would tell them Oh she applied to Stanford you know that's a—he doesn't even know either. I had to explain to him. He's like It's a really good school [laughs]. So, he would just go around telling people and then when I thought that I was gonna be pre-med he was like, Oh she's gonna be a doctor. Yeah so, he was just always very—I would tell him and then he was just my cheerleader. She's gonna be a doctor. She's gonna go to Stanford.

Cynthia recalled her dad being so incredibly proud and supportive of her accomplishments. She remembered explaining to him which schools were prestigious and how her dad would tell everyone about the “really good school[s]” his daughter was accepted to. At the time of applications, she had initially declared a premed track, so her father also expressed his pride that his daughter was going to be a doctor. Reyna, in particular, recalled receiving a lot of emotional

support from her parents. Since high school, it had always been Reyna's dream to attend Berkeley so, naturally, when she found out she was not accepted, she was overcome with emotion. She remembered:

...when I got my...rejection, the letter that said you're rejected from Berkeley, I cried, and I told my mom. I felt like my mom felt bad too. My parents felt bad...I feel like my parents felt bad that I didn't get into Berkeley when I was in high school because they knew that I wanted to go to Berkeley, and they knew that I was applying, but they didn't exactly what schools I applied to. And when I told them I didn't get into Berkeley and I cried they were—they felt bad I can tell.

Though Reyna's parents were not as involved in the ins and outs of which colleges she was applying to, they knew that she had always wanted to go to Berkeley and felt bad when she was denied admission.

Two participants also expressed support in the form of understanding that students would have to stay late in order to receive help on their college applications. As Lorena recalled, she would tell her parents:

...Hey, I need to stay this amount of time. Sometimes I would stay till 8pm at the Boys and Girls Club working on my stuff and it would just be like Oh do you need to be picked up and I was like Look I need to stay cause I wanna finish this or I need to work on this and like Okay well...I'll pick you up at 8. And I was like, Cool, thank you. And so...it was just kind of like, I understand that you...wanna work on this because you need to finish this so, I'mma just let you do that. And I feel like, again it was just because they're like, we can't help you with it at home, so get as much of it as you can done there where you can ask questions and they can answer you.

As Lorena noted, her parents understood they could not help her with college applications so they would pick her up late from the Boys and Girls Club where they knew she was receiving the assistance she needed to complete the applications. Señora Rodriguez, Elena's mother, also brought this up. She noted:

Yo la verdad no sabia que es lo que tenia que hacer solo ella y a mi no mas simplemente me decía el maestro Mire estamos...vamos hacer esto, esto, esto. Pues si [Elena] llega tarde, no se vaya enojar. Y ya le digo Okay esta bien. Y sí se quedaba llenar aplicaciones, a mandar—que mami que ya préstame los taxes. Prestábamos los taxes...yo—pues allí

fuimos pues parte, fuimos parte de eso. [Honestly, I did not know what it was she had to do only she did. Her teacher would tell me, Look...we are going to do this, this, this. If Elena gets home late, don't get upset. And yes, she stayed to fill out applications, to send—mom let me borrow the taxes. We let her borrow the taxes....I—well, it was there that we were a part of, we were part of that].

Señora Rodriguez recalled Elena getting a tremendous amount of help from one of her high school teachers and having to stay after school to work on applications. Besides handing over their taxes, parents were unable to provide technical support during the college application process.

Two participants expressed support in the form of parents attending workshops to learn more about the college process. Through the Boys and Girls Club where Lorena received help, she had the opportunity to bring her father to their monthly meetings. She remembered:

And if it was stuff in Spanish, very specifically, maybe talking, or learning about the whole system here cause a lot of the information that they did get ended up being from the Boys and Girls Club, where we'd have Oh monthly meetings and they were like, Bring your parents and so I would bring my dad.

As Lorena mentioned, much of the information her parents received was through the Boys and Girls Club which led monthly meetings to share general knowledge about college. The fact that this information was provided in Spanish was also a plus. Additionally, Diana's mother, Señora Fernandez, recalled that her husband attended workshops with Diana. She stated:

Entonces nos dieron clases a los padres para orientarnos que es lo que sus hijos iban hacer en la universidad. Aha. Mi esposo fue a las juntas cada ocho días con ella para que sepa que...va ser la universidad, que universidad le conviene, que nivel tiene que tener para cada universidad porque si eres—por decir un ejemplo que un niño de bajas calificaciones, no puede calificar para [WCU]. Entonces no tiene caso que hagan una aplicación donde [WCU] ni la va querer ver. [So, they gave parents classes to orient us as to what our children were going to do at the university. Aha. My husband went to the meetings every eight days with [them] so [they] would know...what university would be like, what university would be the best for [them], what level [they have] to have for each university because if you are—to say, as an example, a student with low grades will not qualify for admission at [WCU]. So, there's no point in submitting an application where [WCU] won't even want to see it].



As Señora Fernandez recalled, her husband always accompanied Diana at these workshops every eight days. It was in these workshops that both Diana and their father learned important information about what to expect in college and how to choose the best school for them given their grades.

Throughout the college application process, two mothers brought up helping to pay for students' college applications. While Diana received four free college applications, Señora Fernandez recalled helping Diana cover the cost of additional applications that ranged around \$150 each. Similarly, Anahi's mother, Señora Montellano, recalled being in a tight spot with money, but still doing whatever it took to help Anahi cover the cost of applications. She remembered:

Pues mira. Una situación bien critica porque pues yo nunca le digo a ella mis problemas porque no me gusta agobiar la con eso porque yo no quiero que ella se enfoque en mis problemas. Ella tiene que estar en lo de ella para que nada le perturbe. Pero por ejemplo en ese tiempo yo estaba en una situación económica...estábamos en una situación económica mal. Me decía Mami fijate que quiero meter una aplicación me decía a...tal universidad, pero no se si fue una o dos veces que me pasó eso. Me decía, pero fijate que yo—no hay seguridad de que me acepten decía y tengo que pagar tanto. Pues, aunque yo estaba en una situación económica difícil, le daba la tarjeta de crédito. Dije ten hija págala...me costó \$150 dólares una. [Well, look. It was a critical situation because I never told her my problems because I don't like to overwhelm her with that because I don't want her to focus on my problems. She has to be in her own thing so that nothing disturbs her. But, for example, during that time I was in an economic situation...we were in a bad economic situation. She would tell me Mom, see I want to submit an application she told me...to such university, but I don't know if that was one or two times that that happened to me. She told me, see the thing is I—it's not for certain that they will accept me she told me, and I have to pay a lot. Well, even though I was in a difficult economic situation, I gave her my credit card. I told her Here hija pay for it...one cost me \$150].

Señor Montellano recalled being in a tight financial spot when Anahi was applying to schools. She never told Anahi about this tough time because she did not want to worry her with her own problems. Not knowing about the family's financial situation, Anahi brought up wanting to submit an application to a university, but was unsure about whether to do so because of the cost

and the fact that there was no guarantee she would be accepted. She paid the \$150 for the application by handing over her credit card to cover the cost. Señora Montellano later elaborated:

Pero yo siempre soy de las personas que pienso que el que no arriesga, no gana. Y ni modo era el estudio de ella y ni modo, aunque el dinero no me sobraba me faltaba. Pero aun así le daba—yo le decía Ten hija aquí esta—¿sí puedes pagar con tarjeta de crédito? Dice sí. Hay te va la tarjeta le decía. Aunque me dolía en el alma y en el corazón faltar \$150 dólares. Pero me tocó. Siempre casi por lo regular pues no se por que siempre se me ha cargado a mi mas como en esa cuestión de pagar al—de comprarle cosas, de pagarle algo o que. Como ella se inclina mas a pedirme a mi o como que será que soy mas flexible yo tal vez que mi esposo. No sé verdad. [But, I'm always the type of person that thinks nothing ventured, nothing gained. And oh well it was for her studies and oh well, even though I did not have an abundance of money, I was lacking it. But still, I gave her—I would tell her Here hija here's the—you can pay with credit card, right? She says yes. I would tell her Here's the credit card. Even though it pained my soul and heart to be out \$150. But it fell on me. Almost always, well I don't know why it always fell on me more when it came to pay—buying her things, paying this or that. It's as if she is more inclined to ask me or maybe it's that I'm more flexible than my husband. I really don't know.

Though she really did not have the money to be using her credit card, Señora Montellano was adamant that sometimes it was necessary to risk things in order to gain things in return. It was during this interview that she reflected back on many instances of Anahi coming to her rather than her father for financial help.

Finally, three participants described attending admitted students events. Elena discussed asking her mother to take her to an admitted students' day at WCU so she could see the campus. Elena's mother, Señora Rodriguez, recalled this event as well. She remembered:

Y llegó la de la [WCU] y ya. Le dije, ¿Hija esa hasta donde está? Mami dice esa esta aquí... Oh 'ta bien, 'ta bien dije. No si, si le digo. Vamos a verla le digo. ¿Vamos a—si mami? Sí que este sábado va ver--que iba ver? —este cuando tocan la campana. ¿Aceptación? Aceptación. Este sábado va ser entonces... le digo si hazlo le digo a ver que pos tienes que firmar. Pues nomas vamos a verla. Dice tu vamos a verla, si me gusta me quedo y si no pos no. Y ya pos el sábado íbamos para allá. [And the one for WCU arrived and that's it. I said, Daughter where is this one at? Mom she says that one is here... Oh okay, okay I said. No yes, yes I tell her. I tell her Let's go see it. We'll go—yes mom? Yes, that this Saturday will be—what was going to be there?—when they ring the bell. Acceptance? Acceptance. It will be this Saturday so... I tell her yes do it and we'll see

what you have to sign. Well, we're only going to see it. You say let's see it, if I like it, I'll stay and if not, then no. And then Saturday we went over there].

When Señora Rodriguez found out that WCU was nearby, she was very pleased and suggested they visit the campus. It just so happened that an admitted students' day event was scheduled for that weekend, so they went with the intention of looking around and seeing the campus. She later remarked that Elena did in fact decide to attend WCU that same day. Similarly, Anahi described inviting her father to attend a welcome day organized by her departmental major. She remembered:

...what ended up selling me to come here was that...the following weekend, the Chicano Studies Department had their welcome night or something, and I had gotten an email and so I RSVP'd. And I came with my dad cause my mom couldn't come, and I remember when we got here, I think it was a good bonding experience for me and him....my dad too, it was cute cause my dad, he was...so happy cause they were all like, Oh, Congratulations, your daughter got in. He's like, O sí [Oh, yes]...And I think that was the first time that me and him had bonded over college and the importance of it too.

Anahi recalled this occasion as a nice bonding moment with her father who had attended the event with her. She remembered everyone congratulating her father for her acceptance into WCU and seeing her father look so happy to hear all of this. She recalled this moment as an important one that allowed her to bond with her father "over college."

**Counterstory: Familial support.** In addition to the support provided by parents, three students mentioned the important role of siblings, cousins, and tíos/tías during the college application process. Anahi recalled that her tío "would take me to a couple of things or pick me up from the airport when I would go visit schools and stuff." Just as parents expressed their opinions on where students should attend, so did students' extended family members. For Anahi, this meant being told by her family that she should stay close to home and attend WCU. For Cynthia, she recalled that her mother's side of the family was very supportive of her going to college and, specifically, WCU.

For Lorena and Cynthia, their older sister(s) were helpful in giving advice and looking over application and scholarship materials. However, because the application system looked differently for their older sisters when they first applied to college, they were unable to provide advice on how to complete the application. As I had previously mentioned, Cynthia's parents were supportive while also urged her not to move and/or that they would move with her. When I spoke to Cynthia's sister, Sara, she mentioned that their mother had a hard time letting go. As such, Sara advocated for their mother to accept the fact that Cynthia would be leaving to WCU. While Cynthia's parents did not ask her questions about the college application process or where she was specifically applying to, her sisters had conversations with her early on to encourage her to think about which schools she would want to attend and what she would want to study. They would also send her resources and scholarships to apply to during her senior year. During the college application process itself, Cynthia recalled that her sisters provided guiding questions for her essays and helped edit them, provided advice on which schools she should apply to, and encouraged her to "dream big" and "reach for the stars." Even though her other sister did not attend college, Cynthia still recalled her sister encouraging her to "follow [her] passion" and "go wherever you're gonna feel comfortable." Because Sara lived right across the street from Cynthia, she was able to provide more hands-on support. As Sara recalled:

And I kind of feel like it was a hybrid of my doing it because I'm the older sister, but it...kinda takes away from me showing up as a sister alone but it also defaulted because her and my son were going through it at the same time and I had also become a pseudo parent to her because our mother is so much older. So, [Cynthia] would come to me a lot for you know many things so I was very involved. You know we would sit here and write her essays for scholarships or you know...I would...put her in touch with some of my friends that were working in other schools. If my mom couldn't go or if my mom was going, I would go with them to go look at colleges or to the college fair.

As I previously mentioned, Sara's son and Cynthia were the same age and would often do homework together at Sara's house. Cynthia would continue to go over to Sara's house and work on scholarships and college applications. She even joined Cynthia at college fairs and visits. In her interview, Cynthia expressed a similar sentiment about Sara's role as a second parent. She stated:

So yeah I feel like growing up, she was kinda like my second mom and I feel like she served as, you know, maybe my parents couldn't really be there for me academically as much, but she was always there to like Hey make sure you're applying to scholarships and she would send me scholarships and like Hey, make sure you apply to your FAFSA. If you need help with it, let me know. I can ask mom to give me the taxes and I'll tell you, which is what, or even pulling my loans. She was the one when I got my EFAN, the financial aid notification, she's the one that I sat down with and asked what loans are safe to pull and you know she's the one that told me You don't wanna pull that one and my sister—my mom was like Yeah whatever your sister's saying go with that.

Though she had gone to college many years ago, Sara was still able to recall the navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) she had personally acquired going through the college process herself and was able to pass this knowledge on to Cynthia. She described feeling as though she had a second mother, one who could be there academically for her in the way her parents could not. As such, Sara was always there to remind her about scholarships, loans, and FAFSA.

A couple of participants expressed that cousins were also helpful in providing advice about the college application process. As Cynthia's sister, Sara, recalled:

And cousins too just now that we have you know [Cynthia] is part of the second—well actually technically she's the first generation—so much younger she kinda blends into the second generation [laughs]. That you know all us first cousins have kind of just corralled and coached and helped and you know taking care of the younger ones to help them out so there's a good support system.

This “good support system” meant that Cynthia received additional help from her cousins who proofread and gave advice on essays and helped fill out applications. Several of these cousins

were teachers or worked at universities. Also growing up close to her cousins, Anahi recalled how supportive her cousins were when she found out she was accepted into WCU. She stated:

And I remember that when I got into [WCU]...at first, I couldn't find out when I had gotten out of school because the system was down. So, then I was like, Oh, whatever, so then I went home, and then they would always come over on Fridays. And so, I always looked forward to that. They would come cause their grandma lives in the house in the front so, I was looking forward to seeing them. And then they came. And then I'm like, Oh I got my [WCU] letter. And then I logged in, and they were there with me. And then they saw that I got in and then they were really happy. And they were just telling me how proud they were of me.

Though some students described missing out on the experience of celebrating with their parents when they received their acceptances, Anahi was still able to celebrate with her cousins who understood what a big deal this was. Anahi also mentioned that one of her cousins who was in college was also able to help answer questions she had related to FAFSA.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** Though students described receiving support from parents and family members, some of them brought up several tensions and challenges they experienced during this time. For example, while some students had older cousins and even siblings who had already navigated through college who provided support during the college application process, other students reported no exchange of information or knowledge among their extended family. These students described cousins as never really talking to them about the importance of college and never offering to help them or answer any questions they might have. While family members had acquired the social and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to traverse the higher education arena, there was a missed opportunity to share this knowledge with younger members of their family, and therefore untapped familial capital that could have been utilized.

***Moving away from home.*** While some students preferred to be closer to home, other students expressed a desire to move away from home and away from their parents, which resulted in applying to a number of different schools out of state as well as some located in

Northern California. As Diana stated, “But I wanted to go far. I knew I was gonna go far. I was like Yeah somewhere even if I needed to be in another state.” For Diana, this desire had more to do about the drama they experienced in high school than necessarily wanting to be away from family. However, for Reyna, Elena, and Anahi their desire to go away for school stemmed from the difficult relationships they had with their parents. As Anahi reflected, “Yeah. For my family, I think the beginning—high school—they played a role in me wanting to leave home and be really far away and have that distance from them.” She further elaborated, “Yeah because they were just, I don't know, I felt very suffocated at home in terms of them always requiring something of me and then also, just the issues that I had with my dad too.” She also expressed experiencing verbal violence from her father which also contributed to her decision to apply to schools on the East Coast and schools that were farther away. Anahi confessed that outside of applying to WCU because it was a good school and close to home, she also applied there because she wanted to see if she “could actually get in.” She revealed her struggle with “self-doubt issues” and “confidence issues,” issues that made her feel like she was never good enough. Elena expressed:

...part of it stems from the things that my dad would say and so then, for me, it was a way to prove that I can get in and that I am worthy enough and smart enough to do these things and so that's why I applied too to [WCU]. So, it was more as a way to fight back and prove to my dad that like, Look, see. I am worth something. I know how to do this.

This act of “fighting back” or resistance on the part of Anahi, is demonstrative of Yosso’s (2006) resistant capital. Though Yosso (2006) uses resistant capital to highlight the ways communities of color engage in acts of resistance against majoritarian communities, I argue that Anahi is also engaging in an act of resistance even if it is against her father. She further explained that when her parents realized she was serious about moving, they were very sad about the possibility of

her leaving. Her mother, in particular, became upset about this possibility and felt that Anahi simply wanted to leave her. Her parents would say

O ven a [WCU]. [Oh, come to WCU] It's really close to home and that way I could see you and my mom always does this thing where she's very...she's extra. She's extra where she does a face or something like she's mad, but she's like, No I'm not mad but she's mad. And I'm like I understand you want me to come here. And she's like, Pues si pero es que me quieres dejar [Well yes but it's because you want to leave me] and she just looks away and I'm like Okay.

Anahi's mother would gossip with Anahi's aunts and tell them that Anahi wanted to leave them to go away for college. It was not until second semester of her senior year when her relationship with her parents shifted. She recalled, "Yeah so they definitely played a factor in wanting to be away, but then second semester as they started changing their attitudes and how I felt about them, then it made me wanna be closer to home." For Anahi, this change made her decision that much harder as she continued to feel the pressure from her parents to stay close to home. Though her parents were pleased when Anahi eventually chose to attend WCU, they did not expect that Anahi would want to live in the residence halls on campus. In fact, Anahi's parents assumed that going to school close to home meant that she would still live at home and commute. She recollected:

They thought that I would live at home. They thought that by me going to [WCU] that meant I would be home, but I was like Oh no I'm leaving. And so, then for them, I think it was a good compromise because I didn't end up going further away, but I was still close by. But they were like, Oh pero porque te tienes que ir? [Oh, but why do you have to leave]. You can just be here....I think they sometimes they don't acknowledge their own toxicity at times. So then, for them, the reason why they think that I leave is because they're not quiet. I can't study in there which one it's true, but also, it's just a lot to handle being at home and being around them for too long....I remember they would tell me, Oh pero porque te vas? Vamos a ser cayados. [Oh, but what are you leaving? We'll be quiet]. We promise. We'll be quiet. We'll give you a space to study too. We'll give you a space to study and do this and do that. And so, they always thought that it was because of the studying aspect, but they never understood that I just needed one my own space as well. But it wasn't hard where they cried because they knew that I was here. But yeah, they did expect me to commute. They thought that I would be commuting, but then they understood also that with my scholarship, that it...came with a lot of perks, everything



paid for....And so then they're like Oh si, vive. Agarra el cuarto mas caro. [Oh yes, live. Get the most expensive room].

Though Anahi's parents had expected her to commute to WCU, Anahi admitted that she needed her own space away from her parents. Her parents pleaded with her that they would be quiet, as they assumed this was the reason why she wanted to leave. However, from Anahi's point of view she felt that, at times, her parents were toxic, and it was "a lot to handle being at home."

Eventually, this disagreement subsided when Anahi found out that she was awarded a prestigious scholarship that would pay for her room and board. It was then that her parents encouraged her to take advantage of all the scholarship's benefits. In addition to Anahi, Elena also expressed a desire to be away from home due to the toxicity of her mother.

While Cynthia decided to attend WCU, which was about a three-hour drive from home, she received a lot of pushback from her father's side of the family. She recalled them telling her "...Why are you going so far? Just stay here and go to community college or something like that." A cousin and tío [uncle] of hers were particularly adamant that she stay close to home. Cynthia remembered being at a family party and having the following conversation with her cousin:

...she was like, why are you going to [WCU]? And I was like it's a good school. I don't know. What do you mean? And she was like there's plenty of good schools here why are you trying to go to this expensive school? You don't need to go to [WCU] to have a good education or get a good career. And I remember feeling so conflicted. I was like, What the heck? Everyone else is so excited for me and I thought this was a good thing and now she's convincing me not to go.

When I asked Cynthia why her cousin might have had that response, she admitted to approaching her cousin later on to try to understand her perspective. She said:

...I asked her Hey can I ask why are you so against me going to [WCU]? What would you have done differently if you were me? And she was in my position a couple years back and it turns out that—so my tío [uncle], her dad, when she—when it was time for her to go to college he told her, If you go anywhere out of San Diego, I'm not helping

you. I'm not gonna pay for your school. Actually, I think he told her period, I'm not helping you. If you want to go to college, you're gonna put yourself through it... And so she put herself through school. She went to San Diego State and she put herself through her education. She worked and literally paid her own books, her own tuition, everything. So, I guess, when she told me that [emphasis] it made more sense why she was coming at me in that way. It's kinda like Why are you gonna spend more money at a different school when you can do it here... her thing was like Oh if it's the same quality of education why you gonna go somewhere else. And it made more sense why she felt that way once I knew how her experience was trying to go to college. So, it did make a little more sense. But yeah, I just told her, I totally get where you're coming from but you know the situation's different you know my parents are—I mean, not to say that her parents weren't—well her parents weren't really supportive of it but my parent's very supportive you know so yeah. But I did approach her about it.

After talking to her cousin, Cynthia learned that she had put herself through college without the financial help from her father. Knowing this context, Cynthia felt like she understood her cousin's perspective about saving money by going to school closer to home. In her cousins' eyes, attending WCU would be way too expensive and there were cheaper options offering just as good of an education in San Diego. Though Cynthia was convinced that her cousin was concerned about finances, part of me wondered if perhaps her cousin felt a little bit of resentment towards Cynthia because she had the support of her parents to move away from home to attend her dream school. Her tío [uncle] confronted her father about her decision to attend WCU. She recalled:

...my tío [uncle]...told my dad, You're stupid for letting her go there because you're gonna pay a lot of money for her. That's a waste of money. There are perfectly fine schools here. You're dumb. You should've told her that she couldn't go. So, that was very discouraging, and I was really like, Wow, that kind of sucked. I was really excited to tell everyone this and everyone was pretty rude about it.

This emphasis on money that Cynthia's cousin brought up was also used by her tío [uncle]. Although initially excited to tell her family about her news, she left the party feeling discouraged after hearing both remarks from her cousin and tío [uncle]. After asking Cynthia to speculate why her family members might have acted that way, she stated:

I mean, I think a big part of that too was that my mom had just recently gone through—she had breast cancer. So, she had recently just gone through all of the chemotherapy, radiation surgery, and I was leaving right when that ended when she had just finished doing all those things. So, like a big thing my uncle kept telling my dad too was How are you gonna afford it with all these medical expenses? How are you gonna do it when—my mom's name is [Socorro]—it's like How you gonna do it when [Socorro] can't...do stuff. And I was like my dad is an able-bodied person. He can feed himself. He can—I think he can manage to keep the house alive and, you know keep himself alive. So, I thought—I was like to think that I have to be there to do that is a bit much.

As Cynthia recalled, throughout her senior year, her mother had been undergoing treatment after being diagnosed with breast cancer. As such, her tío [uncle] pointed to the medical expenses that her parents had already incurred as a reason for why her parents should not waste money sending her to WCU. Her tío [uncle] also asked her father what he was planning on doing when his wife, Socorro, could not do things herself. Cynthia took this to mean that her tío [uncle] was implying that she, as a woman, needed to be at home to help out and take care of things. She remembered thinking to herself that her father was fully capable of managing the house and looking after her mother and himself. Cynthia's sister, Sara, commented that Cynthia was very concerned for their mother during this time, but she and their other sister continued to push her to focus on herself. Sara said that they did not want their mother's health to deter Cynthia from going off and achieving her dream. In fact, several family members stepped up during this period to help out their mother. She continued:

Yeah, I don't know...I thought it was very interesting and I really did think about yeah if it's about money or if it's about...he looked down on my dad for letting me leave and I think also maybe a cultural thing like How could you let your daughter go that far where you can't supervise her, where you can't watch her, where you can't tell her what to do, where you can't tell her when she can or can't go out, why would you do that? So, I think he looked down on him for that sense too of kind of not keeping me on my leash being a daughter. Because again, we know that in Mexican families, the guy gets to do—the son gets to do whatever the heck he wants—leave at midnight and come back at 5am but God forbid, the girl were to go out Oh my God. So, I think that was maybe big part of it too—how can you let her off this leash where you can't watch her anymore. But yeah, I don't know. I guess I'll never have the answer for that since...I would never dare ask him [laughs]. But yeah, it makes me think about it. Yeah plenty of guys move to seek new

opportunity, maybe not educational opportunities, but working opportunities. But then when I [emphasis] leave for an educational opportunity then apparently, it's a really stupid idea [laugh].

As Cynthia continued to wonder aloud about her tío's [uncle] disapproval of her leaving for college, she thought it had more to do with cultural reasons than finances. She pointed to the fact that in Mexican families, young men get to come and go as they please, but young women are not allowed the same freedom. She also brought up the fact that when the men in her family move for work, everyone is very supportive. Yet, the minute she decided to move away for her education, suddenly people had something to say and thought it was "a really stupid idea."

Though her comments included some generalizations about Mexican families, it came from her own personal experience navigating life within her family. Important to her story, is the fact that Cynthia was the first woman on either her mother or father's side of the family to leave the area.

She added:

...I've had many male cousins that...decided to move to New Mexico or they decided to go here or there and—but they're going to work, so it's seen as this admirable Oh, this man [emphasis] is moving with his—he's taking his wife and his kids with him, and he's going to work and he's gonna provide a new, better life for this family that's admirable. But then once I wanted to leave to seek new opportunity for myself, then it was like, Why are you doing that? So, I definitely thought about that a lot and thought about... why is what I'm doing so wrong? Yeah, I thought about that a lot. I also thought about maybe it's a cultural thing that I'm supposed—since I'm a female I'm supposed [emphasis] to stay with my parents and I'm supposed to take care of them and if I'm leaving obviously I can't do that because I'm not home.

Again, she noted this distinction between her male cousins leaving to provide a better life for their family and that being seen as admirable, meanwhile her family questioned her reasoning for leaving home. Though these interactions with her cousin and tío were very difficult in the moment, Cynthia's parents reassured her that she had their full support. They told her:

...don't let what they're saying affect you. That's their personal opinion and that's not how we feel. And you know I asked my dad, Dad do you feel this way cause I don't wanna be a burden or anything like that and he was like, No I want you to go. I will put you

through your schooling if I have to. I want you to do this... I was like, Wow I'm pretty lucky because my dad could've been like, Nope, I'm not gonna help you. If you go, you gotta do it on your own. I'm not gonna support you. So, yeah, that was a little discouraging, but I made it so [laughs].

Wondering if there was any truth to what her tío [uncle] had to say, Cynthia asked her parents whether they felt her decision to attend WCU was a potential burden for them. Her father assured her that it was not and that he would do whatever it took to make sure she was able to achieve her schooling. As you may recall from Cynthia's K-12 experience, her father had not been very interested in her school or grades, but as we can see from the quote above, her father was a fervent supporter of her higher education pursuits.

*Unaware of the college application process.* All of the students in this group shared that their parents were very unfamiliar with the college application process and, thus, could not provide students with practical support. Students commonly described parents as “unaware,” “disconnected,” “didn't know,” and “didn't discuss it much.” For example, Elena noted that her parents were not even aware of the acceptance process or that she had accepted a school. Even Diana's mother, Señora Fernandez, believed that Diana could simply go wherever they wanted to go for school and had to explain to their mother that they could only go to a school that accepted them.

Since most parents were unaware of the college application process, students were the ones to take the initiative to update them about what they were doing and where they were applying. One student, Diana, did note that their parents asked them questions such as “Are you excited?” and “What do you expect?” Diana commented that their parents only ever asked broad questions such as these because “you can't really ask specific questions about something you don't know.” Even when they did ask questions, Diana felt that their parents did not even understand what they were asking. As such, they recalled have minimal conversations with their

parents about the process. Similarly, Reyna expressed, “actually in high school they didn’t know exactly—cause I didn’t know so how am I gonna explain something to them that I didn’t know. So, they knew very little. I just told them I’m applying right now.” From Reyna’s quote, we see the difficulty that arises when parents and students are both unaware of the college application. Without the knowledge of what it means to enter into the higher education system, it is understandable that conversations with parents were few and far between. Furthermore, another challenge experienced by students was parents not realizing the significance of getting into universities, particularly some of the more prestigious ones. While they saw their peers’ parents celebrating and acknowledging their college acceptances, students in this study discussed not being able to experience similar moments with their parents. Lorena recalled:

The other thing that...I feel like probably was kind of disconnecting at home was how other people were reacting to getting into some of the prestigious schools like Berkeley and [WCU] and I was just kind of like I did it [humble and quiet voice]. And I showed my parents. It was like I did it...it was kinda also they kind of expected it cause it was just like...look what you did kind of stuff. Look at your accomplishments. Yeah, you’re gonna get into a good school. And so, some of the excitement that some other students, and their families had was kind of like—I was like, Ooooh and I know that with one of my roommates we were both kind of really of disconnected about it where it was just like, Okay, that’s an option now.

Though Lorena had been admitted into several prestigious schools, which would have been cause for celebration, she described feeling disconnected about her acceptances because her family just figured that of course she would “get into a good school.” This [mis]understanding of what it takes to get into college was something that I echoed in the previous section with community college transfers. There, I detailed how Reyna’s father, Señor Hernandez, believed that all students needed to do to get into college was have good grades in high school. As we can see in the quote above, this same idea was held by Lorena’s parents. Though her parents could not have known what it an accomplishment it was to get into WCU, it was clear that Lorena was

disappointed that she could not celebrate with her parents in the way she would have wanted to. Similarly, Cynthia recalled the following moment with her father when she found out the decision from WCU:

And I remember when I got accepted to [WCU]...[WCU] was my top choice. I was so excited. I was almost crying and I walk into the living and I'm like, Dad, I got into [WCU] and he was like, Okay, cool and turns up the baseball game and tells me to put something in the fridge and I was like, Oh my God. What the heck? And I talked to my cousin about it, one of my dad's nieces, and she was like, You have to understand, he doesn't...understand the achievement that that is so don't take it personal. Don't get upset with him. And then later yeah, I guess she talked to my dad and my dad came up to me he's like, I'm so sorry I didn't know that the acceptance rate was that low. I didn't know that this was so important. I'm sorry that—I should've been more excited for you. But yeah, he felt really bad and then I felt really bad for making him feel bad. But yeah it kinda made me realize, Okay...I need to be more patient and more understanding rather than expecting them to react the way I wanted them to react...

Upon learning about her acceptance into WCU, Cynthia was overcome with emotion and joy as this was her top choice. Just like in Lorena's story, Cynthia shared with her father that she had been accepted into WCU and was disappointed that her father did not take a moment to recognize this accomplishment. Cynthia had shared her disappointment with her cousin who then spoke with her father and explained how big of an accomplishment it was for her to be admitted into WCU, especially since they had a low acceptance rate. Cynthia also realized that it was important for her to recognize that her father never went to college and did not possess the understanding to know that she had achieved something great. She came to the conclusion that she needed to readjust her expectations for her parents, understand that they may not always react how she would like them to, and be more patient with them in the process.

## **College Support and Involvement**

### **Community College**

Four students spoke about their experience with their parents and family throughout their community college experience. While three of these students lived at home, the fourth student lived with her grandparents.

**Themes in counterstories.** Across the board, students remarked that the best part about living with their parents was home cooked meals. Students also enjoyed not having to pay rent. Whether it was through attending graduation ceremonies or students' programs/events, parents and family members had varying levels of engagement with students' community college experience. Karen recalled taking her mother on a campus tour because she wanted to share that experience with her. Rosa remembered inviting her parents to all of her graduation and scholarship ceremonies, events that her parents never missed. She stated, "my dad always made sure to come home early. My mom's always like Okay you gotta change into a nice outfit and things like that and then—so they're always there supporting more in that aspect." Nayeli recalled a special moment with her father at her graduation ceremony. She stated, "...I gave him a pin that they had, and it said Proud [WCU] parent I believe, and that day I got my associate's, my graduation, he wore his pin. So yeah he's really proud of me." No student was more proactive at involving her family than Reyna, who at various points, brought her boyfriend, sister, mother, and father to her programs/events. Both Reyna and her father, Señor Hernandez, recalled attending a conference for community college transfers hosted at WCU. Given that the conference was free and open to the public, Reyna thought this would be a perfect opportunity for him to see the differences between WCU and her predominantly Latino community college. She recalled being in one of the conference workshops:

it was kinda embarrassing cause he was taking pictures of me and I asked...certain questions cause I had a lot of questions about transfer life and all that and that was specifically for students who were going in the fall....And my dad was taking pictures and videos and I think that's when it hit him.



In what can be described as a very sweet moment, Reyna's father captured the moments in which she rose up to ask questions via photo and video. Reyna also did her part to include her mother, sister, and partner in her community college experience by inviting them to a number of programs and ceremonies for family members. She also took her mother to a transfer day through MEChA that provided an opportunity for students to bring their families and celebrate with food from different Latin American countries. Additionally, she felt it was important to share her accomplishments (e.g., scholarships and grades) and was very open about her stresses and worries. When I asked students in what ways they supported their parents and/or families while in college, Reyna was the only one to provide an answer. She detailed that she had encouraged her mother to separate from her father and offered up the possibility of her working since she was in college. Being in community college and living at home meant that she was able to be there for her mother as she was dealing with the separation. She commented that had she not been in community college, she probably would have put her education on hold to help support her mother. Not only was Reyna there for her mother emotionally, but she also moved out of her parent's place into an apartment with her mother. Reyna's boyfriend, now husband, moved in with them to help alleviate some of the financial burden on Reyna's mother.

Students also talked about the support they received from extended family and partners. One thing that Nayeli always looked forward to was her grandmother's cooking. As Nayeli recalled, "...my grandma always had a hot meal and it was bomb." Furthermore, she contributed \$200 towards rent every month. In addition to providing home cooked meals, Nayeli's grandmother watched over her daughter and picked her up from after school care until she was two years old. This help was instrumental in allowing Nayeli to finish her homework. Reyna described her relationship with her partner and detailed several examples of the encouragement

and support he gave her. One moment that stood out for her was an interaction that she had with a counselor who suggested that she would struggle being a psychology major and would most likely not get into WCU with that major. Believing that he was a professional who knew what he was talking about, Reyna thought it was in her best interest to switch majors. She described the following conversation with her partner upon finishing her advising appointment:

I was stressing and talking to my partner and telling him what happened he's like "He doesn't know. He doesn't—he's giving you advice based on what he knows but...that doesn't mean that you're not gonna get in as a Psychology." And I was like "You know what F this. I'm gonna do whatever I wanna do and if I don't get in, I don't get in. But I wanna do whatever I wanna do."

Though she initially felt dejected about her prospects about getting into WCU as a psychology major, Reyna's partner encouraged her to continue on the path and ignore the counselor's advice. This encouragement pushed Reyna to do things her own way and continue to pursue psychology. She did in fact gain admission into WCU as a psychology major. During this time, she also kept in contact with her grandparents and at one point visited them in Mexico. The bond with her grandparents only continued to grow stronger once she transferred to WCU.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** Though Rosa and Karen were not expected to contribute to household duties, Reyna and Nayeli expressed the difficulty for them with their mother and grandmother respectively who expected them to help around the house. As Nayeli shared about her grandparents:

They have no idea what I'm doing in college. Yeah they just think—because they have no idea, they expect me to still—when I was living with them, to still do chores, to help around the house which I did, but they didn't understand that was taking my time from my homework and they don't understand that cause they don't know what homework's like. So, I don't think they got—for sure no higher education.

Because her grandparents had no context for college and how homework differed from K-12, they did not understand why Nayeli could not continue to "do chores, to help around the house."

She later mentioned that her family thought her associate degree was equivalent to a high school diploma, so they were really unaware of how the higher education system operated. Though Reyna's mother understood that college was stressful for Reyna, she still expected her help. Reyna often felt an internal conflict when her mother asked her to do certain tasks and described these moments as her student identity clashing with her daughter identity.

While Reyna believed that she had more freedom in community college and could be as involved as she wanted to be, both Rosa and Nayeli experienced much stricter households, which meant not having much of a social life. Nayeli's grandmother would tell her, "...you can't live with us if you...go out to eat with your friend or something...my grandma had twelve sisters, three brothers, so she doesn't understand friends. She says I don't need friends, just family." According to Nayeli, because she was not allowed to go out, she "didn't have any distractions," which allowed her to be "focused on school."

Students also experienced varying levels of strain within their relationships with parents and family members. For Nayeli, this tension had everything to do with her daughter, who she had after graduating from high school and before starting community college. She recalled her father being upset and not approving of her pregnancy. At one point he told her, "You're just gonna be like your mom." Having not been close to her sister during high school, the two of them reconnected once Nayeli gave birth to her daughter and became a single mother. She said that her sister "felt bad for [her]," but I also think that the fact that both sisters had a child and were single mothers probably facilitated this reconnection. The beginning of Reyna's community college experience was marked with several challenges such as getting acclimated to college and dealing with her parent's separation and eventual divorce. She stated:

and then my parents also split up in 2014 so it was different for me...as a coping mechanism from my parents splitting up I...was very diligent with my schoolwork and

I...just pretty much got involved in school 100% cause I was coping with that. So, I tried kinda just immerse myself completely into being a college student and kinda putting my family in the background a little bit.

School became a refuge for her as she tried to find productive ways to cope with her parent's separation. Reyna elaborated that this time period was particularly stressful because she was put in the middle having to serve as the messenger between her parents. Because of the separation, her parents lived in their own separate apartments, which proved to be particularly difficult for her mother who made less money than her father. She recalled:

So, there wasn't any more of a share of salary. It was just they were on their own and I was going to school. I wasn't working so what we decided to do actually, my boyfriend moved in with me and my mom...he had just gotten a job...so he was gonna make some money and he kinda helped my mom and I kind of pay for rent too cause it was really expensive, too. And my dad I think paid for his own rent...I actually didn't talk to my dad for like a year cause I was very upset at him...

Knowing that money was tight, Reyna's boyfriend, now partner, offered to help out and the three of them got an apartment together. Reyna described this living situation as particularly stressful and recalled that her relationship with her mother was "kinda confrontational sometimes." Not having her own space, she felt as though she had to divide herself into roles. She recalled:

Being at home you have to be a daughter and you have to be a student because you have to do assignments and you have to have some time for yourself and then being a partner. So, I think that was the downside of being at home.

As Reyna expressed, she felt as though all of her roles were clashing with one another, which made it very difficult to balance. With regard to her student and daughter role, Reyna recalled several instances of speaking up about language and views that her parents expressed that she felt were problematic. She recalled the following story:

when I just started being a college student, I remember...my first Chicano class...I was a student but then I was also learning about why I thought the way that I thought or I had certain views about class, or colorism you know, all these things and then trying to practice that as an individual as a "educated individual" and then you know having that conflict with my parents cause sometimes my parents were like Why are you doing this

this way? Why are you saying things like that? Or sometimes my dad would do things that I was bothered by because now I was able to see it or now I was able to put a name on it as opposed to before I was just angry and I didn't know why so things like that. Or...I would tell them I'm not okay with this and that educated you know mujer [woman] student was a conflict with the daughter.

After taking a Chicano/a studies class in college, Reyna was exposed to knowledge that was new and caused her to re-think her previously held beliefs. She would challenge her parents, particularly her father, during conversations and point out why she did not agree with what they were saying. Furthermore, Reyna saw the contradiction that existed within her father's reaction.

As she stated:

For example, with my dad...when he would get upset he's like, Just because you think you're going to college doesn't mean that you know all these things or you're an adult. And then I would feel bad because I was like Yeah but you wanted me to go to college right? You want me to be this educated person and then now that I'm kinda telling you why there's certain things that we may have thought or said that are wrong, you feel like now I'm all that.

As Reyna explained, this contradiction was present in the fact that her father wanted her to receive a college education and once she was there and learning, he did not approve of the way she was using this education to challenge his perspectives. She elaborated that she continues to struggle with this to this day and expressed that she remains steadfast in saying what she has to say. Whether or not her parents respect her perspective is up to them, but she did reflect that engaging in this process was tiring and sometimes she did not feel like arguing with her family. On top of all this, her relationship with her father became estranged as both Reyna and Señor Hernandez discussed in their interviews that they did not speak to one another for some time. Even though they had not been speaking, Reyna invited him to her graduation ceremony, but for some reason her father could not attend. Her parent's separation also created some conflict with her younger sister who chose a completely different way of coping that clashed with Reyna's.

Two students, Rosa and Reyna brought up their mental health while living at home. As Reyna suffered from a lot of anxiety, being able to live at home and be with her family, partner, and dogs provided a sense of comfort and rest, both of which she believed had a positive effect on her. Because her college was less than 15 minutes away from home and had several options to get to school, Reyna felt that she had a lot more freedom to be as involved as she wanted to be in programs and events, something that she did not experience in high school. On the other hand, Rosa felt as though living at home provided challenges because she did not have the space to decompress. She noted:

you come home and mom's trying to hang out with you. You don't want to do anything but just lay in bed but if you just lay in bed all day, she's like What is wrong with you? Why are you laying in bed? Are you sick? Are you sad? What's wrong? But it's like No I just need to not do anything to decompress you know but I feel like they're also in that mentality where it's—I mean they never really learned about mental health or taking a step back and taking care of yourself. So, I feel for them it's always like the Go, Go, Go you can't stop. It's like you...need a second to just bring yourself back together and not do anything and I feel like they never really understood that, and sometimes I feel like now they understand that because we've taught them. It's like we just need—you know our brain just needs to stop thinking, you know? It just needs to be put on hold for a little bit.

As Rosa recalled in the quote above, she often needed time to decompress from college, but any time she tried to relax and not do anything, her mother assumed that something was wrong. She reflected that because her parents have always been on the go, they have never known what it is like to press pause and take a moment for themselves. With time and with her sisters' help, Rosa's parents eventually reached a point where they understood how important it was to rest.

#### **Four-Year University**

**Counterstories: Parent-student relationships.** Although about half of students described having a less than positive relationship with at least one of their parents in high school, these students reported positive changes to their relationships while at WCU. Students reported

stronger and more honest relationship with parents, particularly their fathers. For example, when Lorena described her relationship with her father she stated:

my dad again being...emotionally kinda stunted...from his childhood and us moving and then her going off to college, and then me going off to college, I feel like softened him up or kind of opened up his heart to being like Hey, y'all are growing up so it's now or never. We gotta open up.

Lorena later elaborated that she saw her father as “emotionally constipated” during a good portion of her sister’s life, but that as he seen his two daughters go away to college, it is as if something triggered inside him that allowed him to open up more with them. In another example, when I asked Cynthia to talk about her relationship with her parents in college compared to K-12, she commented:

But honestly, I feel like the dynamic changed a lot once I got to college. It was weird. I actually felt like I got closer to my parents once I came here and a lot of that came with the fact that I actually started being very vulnerable with them, like Hey I'm struggling. This is hard and I would cry to them. And because of that, then they started being vulnerable with me. And it was like Wow you're a human just like me [laughs]. You also have fears and anxieties just like I do. So, I feel like me coming here, actually made me a lot closer to them, especially my dad because my dad is—I mean I don't know, we know Latino culture very machismo—I'm tough. I'm strong. Nothing phases me. And I feel like once I got here, my dad really started opening up to me about like Look I struggled with this too. So, it was very, like, Wow, my dad's opening up to me and he's talking to me about all these things he struggled with you know. That wasn't my dad before so yeah, I definitely feel like our bond actually got stronger once I came here.

Being away from home and her large family in a new place, Cynthia’s first year was quite lonely. With no one around to vent to, she reached out to the one support system she knew would be there for her, her parents. By being open with them about the struggles she was experiencing in college, they in turn became open and vulnerable with her in ways that they had previously not demonstrated. As she described it, she realized they were “human just like me.” The change was very apparent in her father who had previously never opened up about his struggles. In Cynthia’s eyes, she attributed this behavior to the Latinx culture where there was a lot of “machismo.” To

be clear, though machismo can show up in the Latino culture, this is not something inherent to Latinos, rather it is rooted in patriarchy, which is pervasive across many cultures. Something about experiencing loneliness in a new place and being away from family helped to foster better relationships among students and parents. Cynthia was not the only one to comment on this shift with her father. As Rosa described:

And for my dad, I feel like I'm now able more to joke around with him and I'm more able to if he makes a joke. I get it more and I say some dumb stuff back and things like that so I feel like the relationship now has grown but it's also because of the point that I'm in and the understanding that I have about them and everything that they've done, I guess...

As she pointed out, her relationship with her father has become a playful one in which they are joking back and forth with one another. While in college, she noted taking the time to learn more about her parents and reflect on their past and current experiences. She later elaborated that she felt as though she had more patience when it came to her parents and explaining things to them. This process of coming to newly formed understandings and reflections about parents was also expressed by several other students. Time away from home in addition to becoming more mature, unlocked a new perspective for students as they reflected back on their past relationships with parents. Parents also talked about seeing a new level of maturity in students. Now, the interactions students previously had with parents made a lot more sense to them. For example, Reyna described previously feeling resentful towards her parents for the things they could not provide for her; however, all of that changed when she began at WCU. Without any of the resentment she once felt, she now recognized that her parents struggled to give her what they could. In a low voice and on the verge of tears, she stated:

I'm thankful for what my parents gave me and if it wasn't for them coming to the U.S.—cause sometimes I saw it Ugh why did they—I didn't ask to be brought to the U.S. It's more like now I literally look at my parents and I say, Thank you for bringing me and thank you for doing the mistakes that you did and expecting me to go to college and whatever it is that you did because you did it right and it pushed me to be a better person.



Recalling these memories provoked an emotional response from Reyna who no doubt thought about the trials and tribulations her parents faced when they first came into the U.S. She expressed gratitude towards her parents for expecting her to obtain a college education because without that, she would not have been the person she was today. As Reyna and others pointed out, time away from family and having personal space meant that when students and parents spent time together there was little conflict, and everyone mostly enjoyed each other's company. For Nayeli, the change in her relationships were less about space and time away, and more about the fact that she had a child. Because of her daughter, she now has a better relationship with her father who she described as a good grandfather who absolutely loves her daughter. Though he did not initially approve of her pregnancy, he has a lot of love for his granddaughter. Knowing how difficult it was to be a mother, Nayeli had a newfound respect for her mother and realized that she did the best she could to care for her.

Those students who had previously reported positive relationships with at least one parent, still continued to do so while in college. One such student was Karen who described her relationship with her mother as "a really good relationship" and attributed this as being a "Latino thing." Though I agree with Karen that many of the students in the study expressed having good relationships with their mothers, I would not necessarily attribute this as being inherent to the Latino culture.

**Communication.** Students described having regular communication with their parents and spoke to them a minimum of once a week. Of course, the majority of students spoke to their parents much more frequently, some even several times a day. Furthermore, communication with mothers was often reciprocal, while communication with fathers was more often than not initiated by students. This pattern makes sense given that the majority of students described

having closer relationships with their mothers than their fathers. Some students even described their relationship with their mothers as a friendship in which they could go to each other for advice. Several students also mentioned being told by their mothers that they should call their fathers more often, so they would not feel bad. For example, Cynthia recalled her mother telling her:

... You should call your dad. He feels bad cause you never call his [emphasis] cellphone so like Okay I'll try to call dad more. But sometimes he'll, he's so cute, he'll randomly call me and he's like Hey mija. What are you doing? And I'm like Oh nothing just working on homework. He's like Okay just wanted to talk to you, see you're doing good. Okay [laughs]. And I'm like Awww I should call him more [laughs].

Because Cynthia always called her mother's cell phone to talk to her parents, her mother suggested that she try calling her father's phone to talk to him. She mentioned making a mental note to reach out to him more often and described receiving the occasional phone call from him to check in to see how she was doing. At least one student, Reyna, pointed out that phones work both ways and that fathers could show some initiation and pick up the phone to reach out to them.

Students reconciled the fact that they did not visit home often by increasing their communication with parents via text, FaceTime, or phone calls. Though it took some getting used to, parents eventually realized that if students did not call them, it was because they were busy. Most parents understood and would wait until students had the time to reach out. As Anahi's mother, Señora Montellano, recalled:

Ella tarde veces hasta cuatro, cinco días para hablarme por teléfono, pero siempre que me habla me habla disculpándose. Discúlpame mami porque he estado muy ocupada, pero yo le digo No mija tu no te preocupas por nosotros le digo... tu enfócate en lo tuyo y si no tienes tiempo de venir, de hablarnos, no me hables le digo. Lo que quiero que estés enfocada en lo tuyo. Le digo no hay problema le digo yo te entiendo, te entendemos y sí la entendemos en realidad. Que si no me habla yo se que es porque no puede. [She sometimes takes up to four, five days to call me over the phone, but every time she calls me, she calls me apologizing. Forgive me mom because I've been busy, but I tell her No

mija don't worry about us...you focus on your things and if you don't have time to come, to call us, don't call me I tell her. What I want is for you to be focused on your own things. I tell her there is no problem I understand, we understand, and yes, we really understand her. If she doesn't call me, I know it's because she can't].

She described her daughter Anahi as not being the best at calling as she would call every four or five days. Like clockwork, each time Anahi called home, she always apologized to her mother for not calling back sooner. Señora Montellano was always quick to reassure her that it was okay and that she needed to remain focused on her schoolwork. She understood that she was busy and that if she did not call it was because it was not possible. She rather Anahi not call or visit if she truly did not have the capacity to do so.

During conversations with parents, students often discussed their daily lives and shared details about their academic life such as how classes were going and when they had exams. Several students even mentioned talking to their parents about the interview process for this study. The level of detail in which students used to describe the academic side of their life varied from students providing examples of the ins and outs of school to others who did not describe things in as much detail because they knew their parents most likely would not understand. Several students used FaceTime to show their parents where classes were located, what campus looked like, or just to see each other while talking. Some parents were proactive in asking questions about college life and other times, students shared this information with parents without being prompted. Additionally, students kept parents up to date about accolades they received as well as sent pictures of themselves, or in the case of Nayeli, pictures of her daughter. On the flip side, parents would discuss their daily lives and any family updates with students. Señora Montellano used conversations with Anahi to alleviate any stress that she was feeling. She recalled, “yo trato de platicarle algo para que se ría...pa' que le saque del estrés que tiene.” [I try to talk to her and make her laugh, in order to get rid of any stress that she has]. Señora

Montellano felt she supported Anahi by keeping the conversation lighthearted and using humor to lessen the stress she felt. When I asked parents if there was something they wished they could talk with students about but were not able to, Señora Montellano confessed that she did feel as though something was missing. She believed that Anahi was very serious and short when they talked and wished that Anahi felt a little more trust with her to be able to talk in depth about things.

Three students discussed making intentional efforts to include their parents in their college lives. For example, Karen recalled:

...for example, I wrote about mental health in the Central American immigrants and how it affects them so I was like Mom can I interview you [emphasis]? So, I asked her I'm like so what do you think? And so she told me...I sometimes do that even though the answer that they give me is...not what I'm looking for but you know I pretend like it is useful that I use it for my schooling cause I feel like I want them to feel like they're helping somehow. My dad sometimes I ask from Guatemala, stories, how to say certain things in Spanish...

For Karen, it was important that her parents felt as though they were contributing to her schoolwork. As such, she used any opportunity to ask them questions, even if the answers they provide were not necessarily what she was “looking for.” Karen also involved her mother in her life by introducing her to her friends at WCU as did other students like Anahi and Elena. Anahi's and Elena's mothers also mentioned the fact that they knew their daughters' friends. Finally, Lorena recalled being in a folklórico organization and sharing the songs from their dances with her parents. In this way, folklórico served as an entry point for Lorena to involve her parents in something that they were culturally and linguistically familiar with.

***Visiting home.*** The frequency with which students visited home depended on students' distance from home, available transportation, class schedule, co-curricular involvement, and strength of relationship with parents. At minimum, students went back home during school

breaks, and at most, students visited home every weekend. Even when parents could not visit home, parents often made the drive to campus to pick up students and spend time with them for a few hours. Additionally, parents understood that students could not visit as often as they would have hoped.

When I asked students whether they previously believed they would be visiting home as often as they did, the majority of students expressed their shock at how often they went home. Students had originally anticipated that they would only go back home during break as is usually depicted in movies and television. For Cynthia and Rosa, the two students who went “away” for school, both expressed challenges of being in a new place and missing their family. Because it was often a hassle and/or expensive to take the train or fly back home, Cynthia and Rosa did not visit home often during their first few years at WCU. It was not until Cynthia got a car and Rosa started working and could afford plane tickets that both were able to visit home more often.

Four students discussed experiencing high levels of stress at various points throughout their time at WCU and it was during these moments that they visited home more frequently. Whether it was stress from leadership positions, midterms, or a first-year summer program, students preferred method of coping was going back home with their family. In fact, several students described home as a “sanctuary” or “escape” from all of the things they worried about in college. Lorena noted that she liked to go home after midterms because of her tendency to ruminate on questions. She stated, “...going home is a way for me to be able to let go of that and also to be able to talk to my family about it and for them to be able to help me get through that.” Back at home, Lorena was able to count on her parent’s and sister’s support to talk her through her worries. For Lorena and other students, time spent at home was reserved for family and resting. As Anahi noted, “I see home as a way to escape everything and just focus on myself and

relaxing.” Quality time with family often involved hanging out at home, running errands, going out to eat, and attending family events. Anahi’s mother, Señora Montellano, spoke about what her and Anahi would do when she visited: “Pero cuando trae tiempo para descansar, nos acostamos allí en mi cama a ver televisión juntas. Llevo...fruta que comamos...algún[os] Hot Cheetos y nos...ponemos a ver movies. Sí nos podemos a ver movies.” [But when she has time to rest, we lay on my bed to watch television together. I take fruit to eat...some Hot Cheetos...and...we sit and watch movies].

While a few students mentioned doing work at home, most students planned their visits home around classes, assignments, and midterms/finals. Cynthia described her process for planning her visits home:

Yeah I purposefully will time it so that I know oh this weekend I’ll have just finished my midterms so I won’t have too heavy homework or I’ll even plan it where oh I have this assignment due next week, let me do it this week so then when I go home I don’t have to do it [laughs]. So, I’ll kinda coordinate like that cause I know that once I go home, I’m not gonna do work [laughs].

Like Cynthia, other students knew themselves well enough to know that any intentions to do work would go out the window once they got home. Thus, most students similarly planned visits home around major deadlines like exams and assignments. With regard to assignments, most students did their work ahead of time or made time on Sundays to complete them.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** While students mostly reported positive relationships with at least one or both parents, one student expressed not having much of a relationship with her mother and about four students expressed not having much of a relationship with their fathers. These relationships were also characterized as having minimal communication. Elena described her relationship with her father as: “We just talk. It’s kind of like a professional type of conversation but yeah, we’re still building up to that. I think with time

it will get better.” She also admitted that in the earlier part of college she held a lot of animosity towards him for the way he treated her mom. Elena described that over time these intense feelings went away with her father’s increasing maturity and by demonstrating that he was not the same person as before. Elena explained that her perspective about her father began to shift as she reflected more and more about everything that he had done for her despite not being her biological father. Through examples such as this, we see how fluid relationships can be over time. Diana, on the other hand, described their somewhat strained relationship with their father as nonexistent and made more difficult by the fact that Diana’s mother would often vent to them about their father. Listening to their parent’s issues made Diana feel like a marriage counselor and made it difficult for them to feel unbiased towards their father knowing what they knew about him. Another point of contention for Diana had to do with the fact that they characterized themselves as very bold and unafraid to challenge their father when he used language that was problematic. Furthermore, he was not open to have discussions about topics Diana was learning as a Chicana Studies minor. He would tell Diana, “Ya vas a empezar.” [You’re going to start this again]. As a result, having conversations with him proved to be very difficult.

Moreover, even when relationships were positive, all of the students described challenges and tensions they experienced within their families. For example, as the child of divorced parents, Reyna was often caught in the middle and described having to act as the mediator/pull strings from all different sides. For Cynthia, Elena, and Diana, many of the tensions they experienced stemmed from the (in)frequency in which they communicated and visited with their family. All three mentioned receiving constant questions about when they would go back home to visit, which made them feel guilty about not visiting regularly. Cynthia found it hard to say no and would sometimes “sacrifice some time to go spend time with them.” For Elena, at least early

on in college, the frequency of her visits was a direct reflection of her strained relationship with her parents. This time period was marked by minimal communication and visits only when the residence halls were closed. After being subject to dismissal and reaching out to her mother for guidance, Elena soon began to develop that relationship and increased her visits back home to about once a month. Later in college, Elena described feeling as though she was not being a good daughter because of how infrequently she went to visit her family and knowing full well that her parents were only getting older. She expressed that her parents tried to guilt her into visiting more frequently and confessed that this affected her mental health. Though this was the case, she also acknowledged that her parents understood why she could not visit more regularly. In Diana's case, they would tell their mother that they would visit during the weekend, but when the weekend rolled around, they ended up getting busy with other things and would not stop by. This caused some tension with their mother who looked forward to Diana visiting only for Diana to tell her they were not going to stop by. It got to a point where Diana's mother stopped getting her hopes up and expected Diana to cancel last minute. This of course made Diana feel "shitty" and guilty for making their mom feel bad so they decided that rather than tell their mother when they were going home, they would just show up. Around this time, Diana's mother also became sick, which prompted Diana to visit home more frequently. Diana confessed that they spent more time thinking about their family than their academics.

Interactions between students and parents at home were also fraught with tensions. For Karen who lived at home while attending WCU, she confessed how much of a distraction her mother was from getting any work done. Having a good relationship meant being able to chat for hours on end. Rather than tell her mother that she cannot talk because she is working and risk making her mother feel bad, Karen decided she would finish her work at school before coming



home. For others, this difficulty in completing work at home was due to the fact that students felt they had no space to do work. As a result, they chose not to take work home with them. For Diana who lived at home for one quarter during their third year, one challenge associated with living at home involved the fact that they would often come home late, which prompted their mother to experience stress related hives. Though Diana had made it clear to their mother that if they moved back home they would still continue their normal routine of going out and partying, it became apparent to Diana that they were the source of their mother's stress and she decided to move out. Other challenging factors that led to Diana moving out included being tired of the commute, disagreements with their parents about their appearance (e.g., piercings, clothes, and mother's desire that they be more feminine). They recalled the following interactions with their mother:

...maybe I'd sit for max an hour and then my mom would be like, Oh, do you really gotta be sitting down all day? You should get up and wash the dishes. Take a break from that. I doubt you're really doing homework. I'm like No, I'm doing homework...

Diana described numerous occasions in which their mother would think they were not actually doing homework, when in reality they were. Because Diana did not have a desk, they would spread out all the papers on the kitchen table, but each time they felt they were in a groove, they were asked to help make dinner and clear off the table. Diana described feeling as though "it was always me invading space and not being able to really focus on my work." As such, Diana felt that there were no "boundaries or respect" as they were trying to get their education. On a more personal note, Diana discussed the challenges that came with opening up to their mother about their nonbinary identity. She detailed:

"I told my mom and she was like, Oh, I just don't want you to want girls. It's okay, but I don't want you to want girls. Don't tell me that you're gonna be a lesbian now and I was like You're missing the point. This is not what I'm saying...I can't really have that

conversation with them. They'll listen, but in their head, they stop listening and still think what they wanna think."

Though Diana uses both she/her and they/them pronouns, Diana's mother always used she/her pronouns when referring to Diana. In addition to identifying as nonbinary, Diana also identified as sexually fluid which no doubt made the conversation twice as frustrating.

A couple of students also talked about how challenging it was to get work done because their parents frequently asked them for help. For Karen, her parents often relied on her to do many things, particularly in moments when she was busy with school. Part of her wished that her parents would be able to do things on their own rather than ask for her help. Just like Karen, Anahi described feeling frustrated when her parents asked her to do things for them, especially when she was in the middle of doing something herself. She would commonly hear "No estas haciendo nada" [You're not doing anything] or "No mas hazlo aquí rápido" [Just do it here quickly] or "Nunca haces lo que yo te digo" [You never do what I ask you to do]. Though she admitted that she sometimes does not do what they ask of her, she expressed that many of her challenges stemmed from the fact that her parents did not understand that the life of a college student entailed much more than just studying. Sometimes when she was struggling with work, she would hear her parents say "O es que no estas poniendo esfuerzo" [Oh, it's because you're not putting in any effort]. For her parents, there was this assumption that if you put in work, you will be fine, yet the reality was much more complex. As Anahi explained to me, school was but a slice of college that more broadly included being involved in extracurriculars and research. In those moments, Anahi often reminded herself that they meant well but did not understand. Furthermore, she described several occasions of missing classes to translate for her parents and expressed how challenging it was for her to offer help only for her parents to get mad at her in the process. Anahi also commented that she often went back home on weekends but left her

homework for Sunday because home was where she relaxed. Putting off her work often caused her to feel stressed and moody and she often took this out on her parents. She realized that it began to affect her relationship with her parents who commented that she was always upset on Sundays. To alleviate this issue, Anahi made a plan to do work earlier in the week and plan out assignments ahead of time. This change has alleviated some of the stress she used to feel. When I spoke to her mother, Señora Montellano, she described always seeing Anahi stressed and rushed, and admitted to telling Anahi to not force a visit home if she truly could not take the time away from her studies.

Elena also described a challenge that involved doing something for her family. Specifically, Elena struggled with the fact that her parents would often make comments about how she would get them “papers,” or at the very least a green card, by the time she turned 21. With various tensions at play, Elena simultaneously described a sense of responsibility to make this happen for her parents while also stating that it was not her responsibility. She elaborated that she would of course help her parents and family, but as far as being the one to do everything, that is where she drew the line. As a result of these issues, Elena admitted, “It really messed with my mental health a lot” and discussed seeking therapy through the counseling center on campus. A few students mentioned enjoying time at home but knew what their limits were in terms of how long they could stay at home before needing space from their parents.

**Counterstories: Parental support.** Generally speaking, most students described their parents as always present, making sure they were okay, and supporting them in whatever way they could. As all but two students lived in the surrounding areas, they recalled their parents stopping by to spend time with them and take them out to eat. This was especially important for Reyna who had a lot of anxiety being in a car and reached a point to where she could not drive

out to see her mother. Students also described parents as cheerleaders who always believed that they could do whatever they set their mind to and often offered reassurance and positive words along the way. When I asked parents if there was a type of support they wished they could provide to students, two expressed a desire to provide more financial support while one expressed wanting to provide a car for their student. Though as parents, they wished they could provide more for their children, they knew that this was not always possible and were comforted by what they were already doing to support students. Individual examples of support included helping with laundry, encouraging students to choose their major of choice, providing a space to study, not hovering, and asking questions about classes and college.

***Words of encouragement and advice.*** Four students and three mothers brought up moral support, particularly words of encouragement and advice like “don’t give up,” “you got this,” and “hang in there.” Though some of these students provided broader examples of receiving this support from their parents or family, this type of support most often came from mothers. Cynthia described how her mother would text her motivational messages during exams. She recalled, “...my mom’s really cute. Every time I have an exam, she’ll memorize the days that I have midterms and stuff, and, on the morning, she’ll text me a little motivational quote and she’ll be like You got this [laughs].” From the parent perspective, Señora Garcia recalled telling her daughter Karen:

Y cuando así hay algún problemita No mamaíta le digo yo se tú [emphasis] puedes. Yo no le digo Ah que eres una bruta. No. Cuando viene con sus fracasos vez No hija esos son errores que uno comete en su vida, pero se arreglan hija y tu puedes, y tu puedes. [And when there’s some little problem I tell her No mamaíta I know that you [emphasis] can do it. I don’t tell her Ah you’re so stupid. No. When she comes with her failures No my daughter those are mistakes that one makes in life, but they can be fixed my daughter and you can do it, you can do it].

This practice of calling their mothers during times of trouble was common across other students. It was during these challenging times in college that students sought refuge from the words of their parents. Like Señora Garcia, parents believed that students were smart and capable enough to excel in school and in life. In these moments, mothers also served as reality checks to keep things in perspective when students came to them stressed about classes and grades. For example, Cynthia remembered attending a summer program her first year and calling her mother because she was concerned that she was going to fail her first midterm. Her mother told her:

...Okay, say you do fail it, then what? Life goes on. You're gonna keep breathing. Your heart will continue to beat, and you will live on. So, even if your very worst fear does occur...it's an irrational fear. You're gonna be fine. You're not gonna die.

Hearing her mother's response provided a calming sense of relief and reassurance that nothing bad would happen as a result of her grade. Similarly, Elena's mother, Señora Rodriguez, recalled seeing how stressed Elena was about her grades. She recollected:

Que si ella tiene una B le estresa. Ella—le digo hija espérate, tranquilízate. Se enoja cuando tiene una B. Le digo No hija no te lo tomas así tan dramático le digo. No, no, no. Pero es que mami yo podía haber agarrado—hija, pero pos no te preocupes. ¿Son las finales? No pos no ma. Ah pos 'perate, relájate le digo. Relájate le digo. ¿Solamente son...que son? Pues nomas son—come me decía—son como pruebas. Son pues pruebas nomas de que a ver a que tanto aprendiste. ¿Que tanto—le digo entonces ya las van a calificar? No, no, no. Entonces le digo Espérate. Le digo Me asustas le digo. Pero es que yo quería—pos claro que no hija. Por eso yo creo por eso lo hacen pa' que te preparen mejor, para que seas mejor...Okay mami dice 'ta bien me voy a tranquilizar y ya es cuando la tranquilizo desde aquí. [She is stressed if she has a B. What have I taught you? I tell her Daughter wait, calm down. She gets mad when she has a B. I tell her hija don't take it so seriously. No, no, no. But mom I could have gotten—hija don't worry about it. Are they the finals? Well, no mom. Ah well, I tell her wait, calm down. I tell her calm down. They're only...what are they? She would tell me Well, they're like tests. Well then, they're tests simply to see how much you learned. How much—I tell her so are they going to grade them? No, no, no. So, I tell her, wait. I tell her You scare me. But it's because I wanted—well, of course not daughter. That's why I think they do them so they can better prepare you so you can be better...She says Okay mom, it's okay I'll calm down and that's how I get her to relax from her].

Señora Rodriguez recalled several moments throughout Elena's time in college where she was stressed about not getting the grade she wanted. She always reminded Elena to take a break and relax, especially since they were not her final grades. This advice of taking breaks or relaxing was also reflected in the narratives of Anahi and Señora Fernandez.

Le digo Hija voy a ir. Ay mami, pero es que voy andar bien ocupada y me va estresar que vas estar aquí y no te voy a dar tu tiempo... Mejor dime que es lo que tengo que hacer. Y así la tranquilizo y ya. A veces me hablaba llorando, frustrada que los exámenes. Le digo Mami que te dicho. I know mom. You sé 'ira salte, relájate un ratito. Ya que te relajés vuelve, cierra tus ojos un rato, toma tu momento de meditación de hablar con Dios de que tienes que hablar con Dios entregarle todo. ¿Que te he enseñado? [I tell her I'll come to you daughter. Ay mom, but I'm going to be busy and it will stress me to know you are here and I won't be giving you time... Instead, tell me what I have to do. And that's how I get her to relax and that's it. Sometimes, she would call me crying, frustrated about exams. I tell her What have I taught you daughter? I know mom. I know, Look, leave, relax for a little bit. Once you're relaxed, come back, close your eyes for a little bit, take a moment of meditation to talk to God because you have to talk to God and give him everything. What have I taught you?].

In these moments, Señora Rodriguez wanted badly to go comfort Elena in person, but Elena usually preferred for her mother to give her advice over the phone as that was less stressful for her. Her advice to Elena always included God and the act of praying, which was a continuation of how Señora Rodriguez was raised in her own family. Just as in the example above, when parents spoke about praying for students, it was always tied to the encouragement and advice they provided. For example, "You can do it. I'm praying for you." Similarly, Señor Hernandez would tell Reyna to pray to God any time she was stressed and that would make things easier. Also, Señora Garcia would encourage her daughter Karen to ask God for wisdom and to guide her on the right path. From the student perspective, Elena and Anahi recalled several instances of their mothers offering to pray for them, something that they both appreciated. In Elena's case, she often asked her mother to pray for her even in moments when she was not particularly religious or strong in her faith. In fact, Elena recalled a particular situation in her first year at

WCU where she was notified that she was subject to dismissal. Though at the time she did not have a good relationship with her mother, she felt compelled to reach out to her for her guidance about the situation. It was in this moment that she asked her mother to pray that she do well on her upcoming tests knowing that she needed to get very good grades in order to remain at the institution. As Elena put it, "...I just needed everything, you know? [crying]. Bendiciones. [Blessings]. I needed freaking laughter. I needed everything just to make me feel better and get me out of that situation. It just gave me hope." Her mother agreed to do so and told her, "Don't give up. Just keep on trying. You can't let go of this opportunity."

Students also saw their parents as always being there to talk to and give consejos [advice] along the way. When Elena had a problem with financial aid her mom, Señora Rodriguez, gave her the following advice:

Pero mira hija le digo pos acuérdate que cuando uno habla, lo escuchan. Tu ve, tranquilamente. No vayas enojada como te siento ahorita le digo que estas. Le digo no vayas enojada. Pide hablar con el supervisor. Tranquilamente te sientas y le explicas todo lo que esta pasando. Okay mami lo voy hacer. Okay, pero ya tranquilízate. Le digo si Dios quiera, vas a tener una respuesta. Le voy a pedir mucho a Dios para que te den tu respuesta pronto y ya si...me habló mas alegre otro día. Le digo, ¿Hija como estas? Bien mami. Dije, ¿lograste hablar con el supervisor ...? Oh sí sí hablé mami sí les dije dice. Le digo, ¿y que como te sientes ahora? Ay le hace, me siento bien. ¿Por que? Porque le dije todo lo que tenia que decir. Le digo O que bueno mami. Le digo que bueno me alegra. Okay mami dice ya les dije todo que por favor tienen que cambiar el sistema dice porque siempre lo mismo. [But look hija remember that when one speaks, people listen. You go, calmly. Don't go all upset like how I sense you right now. I tell her don't go upset. Ask to speak to the supervisor. Calmly sit down and explain to them everything that's happening. Okay mom I'll do that. Okay, but calm down already. I tell her God willing, you will get a response. I'm going to ask God that you get a response soon and with that...she called me another day much happier. I ask How are you daughter? Good mom. I ask Did you get a chance to speak to the supervisor...? Oh yes, I did talk to them [laughs]. I ask And how do you feel now? Oh [sigh] she goes, I feel good. Why? Because I told them everything that I needed to tell them. I tell her Oh that's good. I tell her that's good, I'm glad. She says Okay, mom I already told them to please change the system because it's always the same thing]

Señora Rodriguez was always quick to remind Elena to calm down and relax. She suggested to Elena that if she had a problem, she should ask to speak to someone about it and voice her concerns. She utilized her spiritual capital (Yosso, 2006) to let Elena know that she was praying to God on her behalf.

*“We just want you to be happy.”* Above anything else, parents wanted students to be happy. Noticing how stressed Diana was, Señora Fernandez told them, “...si te me vas a volver loca en ese escuela...vas a necesitar psicólogos y...estar...que Ay esa escuela me esta volviendo loca sabes que hija, mejor córtala. Salte de allí y puedes estudiar de otras cosas” [...if you’re going to go crazy in that school...needing psychologists and...being...Oh that school is making me go crazy, you know what daughter, it’s better to cut it off. Get out of there and you can study other things]. During our interview, Señora Fernandez later elaborated that she had heard stories about students committing suicide and suffering from depression and she did not want the same fate for Diana. At the same time, Señora Fernandez still encouraged her to stay in school if that is what she wanted. In fact, Diana did withdraw from WCU during her first year and admitted that they were scared to tell their mother and had not wanted their father and siblings to find out. Diana remembered their mother being very understanding during this time as she had seen how stressed Diana was and the toll college took on them. Diana went on to recall their mother saying, “if you wanna just not go back too, then don’t go back and just stay here with me.” Even though Diana had a relatively good relationship with their mother, once they heard the words “stay here with me,” that was all the push they needed to re-enroll at WCU. Anahi and Cynthia also expressed the stress and difficulties they experienced to their parents who similarly conveyed that they wanted nothing more than to see them happy. As Anahi recalled, her mother told her, “Si no te esta haciendo feliz esto, mejor ya termínalo” [if this isn’t making you happy,



better to be done with it]. Similarly, when Cynthia decided to switch out of the pre-med track, she was worried about telling her parents because she believed she would be letting them down.

She recalled to me her conversation with her parents:

So, I call my mom and yeah, I'm crying and I'm telling her I don't think I wanna do this. I'm so sorry I let you guys down. Dad already told everybody and now I'm changing it I'm so sorry. And my mom was like, [Cynthia], we don't care what you do. We just want you to be happy and...she was like You being at [WCU] is already enough. The fact that you're even there—you wanted to leave, and you stayed. So, the fact that you're even there and you're sticking it through and you're pushing. I don't care if it's to be a doctor. Be whatever you want to be. I'm just proud of you for the fact that you even are there. Being there is enough already.... my dad would always tell me We know you're gonna do great things in whatever you decide to do. So, if you're not an amazing doctor, you're gonna be an amazing psychologist. If you're not an amazing psychologist, you're gonna be an amazing detective. Do whatever you want and be amazing at it.

Much to her relief, the conversation went differently than she had initially anticipated. Her parents reassured her that they wanted her to be happy and that simply being at WCU and sticking it out was more than enough. They expressed their confidence that no matter what career she chose, she would “be amazing at it.”

***Emotional support.*** Four students also cited emotional support as an important type of support they received from their parents. It was in moments of stress, that students sought out the comfort of their parents in person and/or over the phone. For example, Reyna recalled having an intense summer program before starting in the fall and driving back home to be with her mother because of how stressful this time period was for her. In this way, Reyna and other students received both love and support from parents. As Elena recalled, she had been overwhelmed her sophomore year with extracurriculars and academics and did not know what to do. Her mother, Señora Rodriguez, told her, “It’s okay mija. I love you. You got this.” As she recalled this memory, she was visibly overcome with emotion and began to cry. As you may recall, Elena did not have a good relationship with her mother growing up and was not very affectionate or loving

towards her. She admitted that this was the first time her mother had ever told her she loved her.

In turn, her mother described always being with her when she was feeling down. She recalled:

...cuando yo la veía llorar, yo corría y me iba con ella. Dejaba todo y me iba. Pos yo se que es un proceso duro para—y eso que estaba aquí. Luego si se había ido donde quería irse Nueva York—le digo no hija ya quien ti iba ver. [...when I would see her cry, I would run to be with her. I would drop everything and would leave. Well, I know it's a tough process too—and that's with me being here. Then if she had gone to where she wanted to go, New York—I tell her no daughter who would go see you then].

Any time Elena was sad or upset, Señora Rodriguez's first inclination was to go be with her.

During moments like these, she was grateful that Elena had not gone to school far away, because she had the ability to physically show up for her. Though most parents were able to provide in person support, this was not always possible for Cynthia who lived three hours from home. She recalled one particular moment in her college experience in which she “came really close to leaving,” had it not been for her parents' support. This moment involved enrolling in 12 units in a summer program at WCU. She recalled struggling so much that summer that she called her parents to take her home:

...I called my parents crying, and I was like, I can't do this. I wanna go home. Please come pick me up—I will transfer schools. I will do whatever I have to do to go anywhere else. I hate it here. Please don't make me stay here. And my mom...started crying and she was like, Ugh I really wanna go pick you up but also, I don't wanna be the person that allows you to, I guess, not take on this challenge.... She's like I don't wanna be the person that enables you to quit because I know that later, when you do come back home, you're gonna regret that you didn't stay, and you'll resent me because I let you come home. And I was like, Nooooo please! [laughs] Come pick me up.

Though she pleaded with her parents to pick her up, they did not relent. Her mother worried that by picking Cynthia up she would, in effect, be quitting and walking away from this opportunity at WCU and might later regret her decision. As such, she did not want Cynthia to resent her for agreeing to let her go back home. She continued:

And so, I was just struggling a lot and then my dad gets on the phone, and he was just like Oh you know mija you're gonna...you're gonna be fine. You're gonna survive this. And I was like Dad it's so hard. I feel so lonely. And these classes are hard. I don't feel like I'm gonna pass them. I feel like I'm gonna fail. And my dad was like—and this is that vulnerability from him that I had never seen so I was like Oh wow—He told me about when he first came to United States as an immigrant, he crossed the border by himself. He literally came over here by—he's from Jalisco—so he traveled to Tijuana. He had an uncle in Tijuana and stayed there for the night and then he walked across by himself. And he was telling me, I know what you're feeling. When I got here, I was also lonely. I missed my mom and dad. I missed my siblings. I didn't speak the language. That's so hard to feel like you can't even talk to anyone. Nobody understands you. So, he was like, I was lonely. I didn't speak the language...Yeah so, he was like I struggled a lot, but he was like, Look at what I have now. Look at what I got because I stayed, because I fought through those challenges. Now I'm here. I have my own home you know. I made it to be a citizen. I speak English now. I work a great job. I have my family. Everything fell into place, but he was like Imagine if in that moment when I felt really lonely and scared, I would've just went back home. I would've never gotten the things I have now. So then at that point I was just like, well now I have to stay [laughs]. God. Yeah, now I basically have to stay so yeah that was a really emotional moment and I was like you know what Obviously what he did was way harder [laughs] so I could definitely do this. If he could do that, I can do this, you know. So, yeah, it just made me think about like Yeah, I'm here. It's hard and it's challenging and yeah, I feel lonely, but things will get better. I will adapt and I will find my people.

Cynthia admitted to her father how much she was struggling, and he responded with so much encouragement that she would survive this. Cynthia acknowledged that her father had never been very open with her, but in that moment, became very vulnerable with her and shared his own migration journey into the U.S. as a way to relate to what she was experiencing. He shared that he had traveled from Jalisco to Tijuana where he stayed with an uncle before crossing the border. He recalled to her experiencing feelings of loneliness and missing his family members. On top of everything, he did not know English and had trouble communicating with people. Even with all the struggles he experienced, he pointed to the fact that he never gave up and stuck it out in this country. He said that had he not stayed in the U.S., he would not have had all of the things he has now. From Cynthia's point of view, her dad's experience was much worse and made her believe that if he could overcome that, she could definitely continue with school. She continued:

And like my dad was saying the reward once you push through the challenges you're faced with right is great, so I should push through these challenges because—and then it also made me think about obviously he's made so many sacrifices for me to be in this position. I didn't even know any of these things...my mom was telling me that...my dad...lived on a ranch. It's a rancho, and they didn't even have electricity...their meat, they...had cows and chickens and stuff. They would make it when they were gonna eat it. If you're gonna eat chicken for dinner, you slaughter the chicken. You eat right then and there cause they didn't have a fridge. They didn't have lights. They didn't have anything. My dad was the one who put electricity in that home because he came over here, and worked, and sent back money so that his parents could afford to put electricity in their home. And I was just like, Wow, the sacrifice. So then...when he told me that, it completely shifted my mindset and I was like Okay me being here is bigger than me now. This isn't about me anymore. This is about me setting myself up to succeed and to achieve bigger, so that then I can do that for my parents, provide for them later, give them whatever they need later the same way my dad did for his. So, yeah, I was like, Well, now I have to stay. I can't quit now.

As her father had suggested, Cynthia believed that things would get better, she would adapt, and she would reap the benefits of overcoming this challenge. She later learned from her mother that her father had grown up living on a ranch with no electricity. It was because her father worked and sent money back home to Mexico, that his parents were able to have electricity in their home. In that moment, she saw her college journey as bigger than herself and one that would allow her to one day be able to provide for her parents in the same way her dad did for his. The familial capital (Yosso, 2006) that was evident in Cynthia's narrative proved how inspirational it can be for students when family members share their own knowledge and consejos [advice].

***Financial support.*** While a majority of students expressed they were low-income, this did not stop parents or, in the case of Nayeli, her grandparents, from supporting them financially to cover education related (e.g., tuition and school materials) and personal expenses (e.g., rent/housing, flat tires/car related issues, glasses, and clothes. As Anahi noted, her father had continued to take her school supply shopping every year even through college; meanwhile, her mother bought her a Mac laptop during her first year when her computer had stopped working. At least in the case of Karen who lived at home, she was not expected to contribute to rent.

Though Cynthia had received a scholarship that covered her tuition, she was also able to receive financial support from her parents to cover other costs of attendance. She noted:

I've never had to worry about that because my parents have always said—my dad, even told me, I don't care what it is, I will work more, I will do whatever it takes to have to put you through school. You focus on what you need to do. You focus on getting those good grades and I'll focus on getting the money to keep you there. So, I've never ever had to worry about that so seeing my boyfriend and also many of my friends struggle with that struggling with I have to work 40/50 hours a week just to survive. Classes become secondary for them and I have never ever had to worry about that and that's definitely a privilege that I have, and it's because my parents they're wonderful [laughs]. They've always made that sacrifice for me so I'm really, really lucky.

Her father was adamant that her focus should be school and that he would do whatever it took to make sure that he could financially help her. She recognized the privileged position she was in compared to that of her boyfriend and peers who had no other choice but to work, with work often taking priority over classes.

For many parents, part of this financial support was also tied to providing nutritional support for students. For example, Cynthia recalled going out to eat with her parents and going with them to get groceries. She commented:

...I'll get to eat on Sundays with them or if I need groceries like milk or cereal, they'll be like... We'll go to Target or let's go to Northgate kind of thing or if I'm like Oh before we go back, can I get duh, duh, duh, duh, duh. Can we get tacos so I can have them for later and they're like Yeah, so that kind of support that I get.

Like Cynthia, a couple students mentioned going out to eat with their parents during the weekends. This additional support from parents of helping out with groceries was also commonly expressed by students. Whether students lived at home or went back on weekends, several of them commented on how much they loved their mother's cooking. Furthermore, rather than buy groceries, some mothers took it up on themselves to cook meals for students and dropped them off at their apartments. As Señora Fernandez commented, "...mañana cocino y ya tengo dos, tres botecitos se los llevo de comida." [...tomorrow I'll cook, and I'll have two, three,

containers of food that I'll take]. Similarly, knowing that her daughter was very busy and often did not have time to cook, Señora Montellano recalled telling Anahi, "...Mija si no tienes tiempo de cocinar dime yo te puedo cocinar...te llevamos comida para la semana le digo ahorita la cocino. Le digo Dime que quieres y te cocino." [Mija if you don't have time to cook tell me and I can cook for you...I tell her we'll take you food for the week I'll start cooking now. I tell her Tell me what you want, and I'll make it]. Wanting to make sure Anahi had something to eat, Señora Montellano would cook enough food to last for an entire week.

Parents did not always have the money directly in their bank to help out students but were willing to put expenses on their credit cards or sell food to make up the money to cover costs. This was especially the case for Señora Rodriguez who recalled making food to sell in order to pay for Elena to live in the residence halls her first year. She also mentioned an instance in which Elena was waiting for funding to take summer classes and was worried that she would miss the deadline because she did not have the money. Señora Rodriguez recalled telling her:

...No te preocupes le digo. 'ira tu papa tiene una tarjeta de crédito le dije y creo que el ya tiene...son diez mil dólares que tiene de crédito...Mira si no te dan ayuda pues lo agarramos de crédito y no la hace como sea lo pagamos. Pues ya ves que el banco nos da opciones pa' pagar cada mes, cada lo que tu quieras. Si mami, pero allí el banco es—que...nunca vas acabar de pagar. Le dije no te preocupes hija le digo por ayudarte le digo no le hace. [...Don't worry about it I told her. I told her Look, your dad has a credit card and I think that he has...\$10,000 of credit. Look, if they don't give you help then we'll put it on the credit card and it doesn't matter we'll pay it somehow. Well, you know how the bank gives us options to pay every month, every whatever you want. Yes mom, but there the bank—that...you'll never pay it off. I told her Don't worry about it daughter. To help you it doesn't matter].

Señora Rodriguez told Elena not to worry and offered up the solution of putting the bill on her husband's credit card. She expressed to Elena that she not worried about how they would pay it off and that they would manage even if they had to make monthly payments on it. Though Elena

remain concerned about their ability to pay it off, Señora Rodriguez doubled down that it did not matter as long as they helped her in the process.

**Transportation.** Another important method of support was that of transportation. Even within the previous section about financial support, many of the examples that related to grocery shopping, dropping off home cooked meals to students, and taking students out to eat all involved driving around to carry out these acts. Parents, particularly fathers, offered their support in helping students to move in and out of their various residences. Beyond this, many students relied on their parents to pick them up from school whenever they wanted to go back home. No matter the distance, the traffic, the time spent together, parents never complained about driving to pick up students and students were always appreciative of this. Señora Montellano recalled all the back and forth they engaged in to see Anahi. She stated:

...venimos a traerte. Lo que necesitas. A venir por ti hoy y mañana nos haces que te traigamos y nos dices pasado me quiero volver y vienen por mi otra vez y venimos. Digo porque esto es el apoyo que te estamos dando a ti...para tu escuela le digo. Con ir y venir le digo. Pues si porque a veces la llevamos... y dice mañana voy a venir, pero me van ir a recoger otra vez en la tarde porque en la tarde tengo—ya termino mi ultima clase y vamos. Le digo Todo esto te estamos apoyando le digo. [...we'll come to bring you. Whatever you need. If it's to come for you today and tomorrow, you ask us to bring you back and you tell us you want to come back the next day and want us to come get you and we'll come. I say this because this is the support that we're giving you...for your school I say. Coming and going I say. Well, yes because sometimes we'll take her...we'll go pick her up today and she'll say tomorrow I'm going to come, but you're going to come again to pick me up in the evening because in the afternoon I have—I'll finish my last class and then we'll go].

As Señora Montellano recalled, her and her husband were willing to do a pick up and drop off on the same day or even two days in a row. She saw this as their way of supporting Anahi and her education. A couple of students also talked about being able to borrow their parent's car for a quarter or on weekends when they were home. At home, Anahi mentioned:

my dad allows me to use the car to go to Starbucks or somewhere else if I need to do some work or they drop me off there too. They drop me off, pick me up, and then drop me off again.

As is evident from the example above, students very much relied on their parents to drive them around while in college and at home.

***Being part of the graduation experience.*** At the time of the study, two students spoke about the support they received from their parents when they graduated from WCU. Reyna recalled her father attended the larger commencement which was done in English while her mother attended a Raza Grad ceremony and the departmental ceremony through Chicana Studies. Showing up to Elena's graduation were her parents and all but one of her siblings. She described her family as "the loudest people there." She recalled that as she took her seat at commencement, she had so many thoughts and emotions that overcame her. She looked up to see her family screaming her name "[Elena! Elena!]." She further recalled, "seeing them there too that made me tear up more, cause...they're witnessing their sacrifices, their blessings, their support. They're witnessing what can happen and I have generations that are after me seeing this, witnessing this." In her eyes, this moment was all for them. She described what it was like for her to meet up with her family after the ceremony:

They brought matracas [noisemakers] but they couldn't bring them in because it was a contraband or whatever. Yeah so, they were just doing it outside, and my dad was literally jumping and twirling it like a little kid...so yeah, that was really awesome. My little brother saw that too....They saw why their sister was gone for four years. And yeah it was just like, no one can ever take that away from me, you know?...it was a motivation to...I still have...a couple more classes. It was just a motivation to finish and to work hard and move on to the next chapter. And yeah, it was a very rewarding experience and I'm really happy that everyone got to see that. The day after, they threw a comida [dinner]. And my mom did my favorite dish which is carne en su jugo.

Elena recalled receiving so many hugs from her parents and siblings and being told how proud they were of her and how far she had come. She described seeing her dad jumping up and down



with joy and pride spread across his face. Her father later told her that watching her graduate was the best Father's Day gift he could have received. Given that her two youngest siblings were between the ages of 8 and 9, all they knew was that their sister went away, but did not understand why. Nevertheless, they were able to witness a ceremony that honored her tremendous accomplishment and what she had been working towards for four years. She admitted that the act of participating in graduation and sharing that moment with her family gave her the motivation to push through a couple more classes she needed to take before officially complete all of the course requirements for her degree. She recalled that the day after the ceremony, her parents threw a dinner celebration for which her mother cooked her favorite meal. It was there in front of everyone that she thanked her family for all of their bendiciones [blessings] and sacrifices because as she put it, "Everything that they did led me to where I'm at right now." Knowing that she had gone to Elena's graduation, I asked Elena's mother, Señora Rodriguez, to describe to me how she felt when she saw Elena graduate from WCU. She responded:

¿Que sentí? Pues una emoción muy grande, sentimientos encontrados....que de los cuatro años que ella estuvo que fue un sacrificio muy grande para ella porque dejó padre, hermanos, y todo por pos seguir sus estudios. Se quitó de esta vida para tomar otra mejor. Pues me sentí bien orgullosa, pos una madre orgullosa...fueron muchas emociones cuando pasó pos no pude gritar porque empecé a llorar...fuimos los mas gritones de allí. Que fuimos los mas gritones de allí...que Gracias a Dios cumplió su sueño. Que no hay obstáculos en esta vida. Que si alguien quiere salir adelante lo puede lograr. Orgullosa, orgullosa mas que nada....Que pues se logró una meta y pos ahora falta la otra verdad. Que ahora falta la que vamos a celebrar mas. [What did I feel? I felt a very great emotion, mixed feelings....that those four years she was there were a big sacrifice for her because she left parents, siblings, and everything for, well, to continue her studies. She left this life to take a better one. Well, I felt very proud, a proud mother...there were many emotions when she passed that I couldn't yell because I started to cry...we were the loudest ones there. We were the loudest ones there...Thanks to God she achieved her dream. There are no obstacles in this world. If someone wants to get ahead, they can achieve it. Proud, more than anything else proud....That, well, she achieved a goal and well now all that's left is the other one, right? That now all that's left is the one we're going to celebrate even more].

Seeing Elena graduate from WCU was a very special moment for Señora Rodriguez. For her, that moment was marked by a number of mixed emotions, in particular feeling an immense amount of pride as Elena's mother. She recalled how they were the loudest ones in the room and how she was overcome with tears when she saw Elena cross the stage. Knowing that Elena was able to achieve this goal in spite of all of the challenges that she faced across her four years solidified for Señora Rodriguez that if a person wants to get ahead in life there will be no obstacle that will prevent them from achieving their goals. She commented that now that she achieved this goal, all she had left was her other one, which was going to graduate school. As Señora Rodriguez mentioned, once she completed that, they would have an even bigger celebration than the one for her bachelor's.

*Showing up.* All of the students shared that another way parents expressed their support was by showing up and agreeing to join students at various campus events and special occasions. Though this was mostly initiated by students, the fact that parents still agreed to be with them was an active decision on their part to support them in whatever way they needed. Anahi and her mother Señora Montellano both talked about visiting campus to share meals together in the dining halls. Señora Montellano also described attending one of Anahi's presentations as well as going to see plays that Anahi's friends were in. Additionally, Karen and her mother Señora Garcia described making a special trip to campus to take graduation photos. Though her father was also in attendance, Karen felt it was especially important that her mother and sister be there because she was much closer to them and felt that she was where she was at because of her mother. While her family was there, Karen was able to show them various places on campus as they previously had not visited. Finally, both Karen and Diana, along with their mothers,

described going to two separate family events put on by their organization and sorority, respectively. Señora Garcia recounted:

Pues por las veces que nos ha invitado. Ella esta en un programa de unas muchachitas que dicen hermanas unidas y tuvimos un festivo con todos los padres. Si y ya ella pues ya me llevó a conocer a la universidad. [Well, during the times she has invited us. She's in a program of young girls called hermanas unidas and we had a festival with all the parents. Yes, and well she took me to visit the university].

It was at this event that Karen was also able to show her mother and sister where she had lived and worked. Señora Fernandez similarly recalled, “Y allí estuvimos...cada año o cada medio año hacían una convivio entre todos los padres y cada quien llevaba comida.” [And we were there...every year or year and a half they would do a gathering among the parents and every person would bring food].

***Bi-directional support.*** When I asked parents how students supported them while they were in college, three parents described student's good example/behavior. As Señora Rodriguez stated, “Pues con su ejemplo...las ganas de salir adelante, las ganas de superación, de siempre ser persistente....Ella es muy luchista...dice lo voy hacer, lo voy a lograr y lo logra.” [Well, with her example...the desire to get ahead, the desire to improve, of always being persistent....She is very much a fighter...she says I'm going to do it, I'm going to achieve it, and she achieves it]. For Señora Rodriguez, she was very much in awe of her daughter Elena's fighting spirit and her ability to accomplish anything she set her mind to.

By far the most common form of support that students and parents brought up were instrumental tasks such as helping with paperwork/bills and translating documents and conversations. When I asked Señora Montellano how her daughter Anahi supported her, she stated:

Pues nos ayuda como...como en la forma...que tenemos...algún papel que tenemos que llenar en inglés o algo y mandarse por internet. Le esperamos que venga ella y lo hace

porque nosotros ni sabemos....el pago de la casa, ella lo hace. [Well, she helps us as...as in the way...that sometimes we have to fill out a paper in English or something and send it over internet. We wait for her to come and she does it because we don't even know how....the house payment, she does it.]

Not knowing English, Señora Rodriguez and her husband did not know how to fill out necessary paperwork, nor did they know how to send it over the internet. As such, they relied on Anahi to help them with these tasks along with making the house payment. Señora Rodriguez and other parents would often hand over documents they had received in the mail to their children so they could decipher what they said. It was common for students to set up online accounts for their parents' health insurance, phone plans, and employment as most parents were not proficient with using a computer. A couple of students shared that they often helped their parents with technology, particularly teaching them how to use their phones. Karen was one of these students who provided instrumental support to her parents and shared that she has never viewed this as a burden on her and is happy to help any time she has the time to do so. A few students also mentioned helping their parents with job related tasks. Anahi recalled that her father asked her to watch an LGBTQ training video and take the quiz associated with it because he needed to complete it for work. In fact, Anahi commented that her parents regularly expected her to do everything for them. Rather than do it for him, Anahi sat with her father to do the training and paused the video along the way to further explain some of the concepts and engage him in a conversation about pronouns. In another example, Reyna recalled encouraging her father to seek out new job opportunities and told him that she would help him with the application part of the process. She stated, "...I think that college has helped me kind of navigate my way through the systems that the U.S. has, better. So, I try to help him." Having navigated through the higher education system, Reyna possessed the navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) to understand how to

work across different systems and used this knowledge for the purpose of helping her father receive a higher paying job.

Several students also mentioned being concerned and overprotective when it came to their parents. For one, students mentioned being proactive about their parents' health which meant keeping up to date with their health insurance, helping set up doctor's appointments, encouraging them to seek therapy, acupuncture, and more natural medicine. Reyna mentioned, "...for example, my dad has insurance. He doesn't know how to use it so...I told him, Today we're gonna make some appointments, do all these things." She elaborated that one of her goals was to help her father "understand his health care package" so that he could fully utilize his benefits. Rosa also expressed being concerned about her father's health. She stated:

I've always been very overprotective of my dad about his health, because I feel like the regular, traditional Mexican man is not gonna complain about his finger hurting and that can mean it's a lot more than just a finger hurting. It could be a lot more deeper. It's not that I'm paranoid about these things it's just you know that I just wanna make sure that he's okay and that he knows that it's okay to go to the doctor and be taking care of yourself and things like that.

Rosa noted that part of the reason she was concerned about her father was that she saw him as the "traditional Mexican man" who would not even complain if his finger was hurting, and therefore would not complain when something serious was wrong. She told me that she set reminders on her phone of when he needed to leave work early to get his blood pressure checked. She expressed to me that during her time in college she had grown to be very overprotective of her parents and felt a sense of responsibility towards them to ensure that they were okay. When I asked if Rosa ever felt any negative feelings about supporting her parents, she explained:

Of course, I'm gonna do it. They've done so much. Why would I be upset over having to make a phone call for them or if I'm home and if I have to do homework, it's like too bad I have to figure it out. Time management, you know [laughs]. So...I don't see it as a problem at all."

This response was much different from her response about feeling annoyed when she had to help her parents with translation related tasks as a teenager. With time, maturity, and a stronger relationship, Rosa never became upset or annoyed with her parents when they asked for help. Rosa was also concerned about her parents being ethnically profiled in the wake of an anti-immigrant climate and increased immigration enforcement. She noted:

Yeah so I guess this, the being overprotective thing... goes into the legal aspect as well because back then I feel like I didn't quite understand the whole immigration and immigrant and legal status type of situation in the United States so I never thought that it would be important to tell my dad these are your rights you know. And now that...he's getting older it's very obvious he's gonna be stereotyped in the small, little white county that we are in over any other older white man you know so it's like the older you get...the more vulnerable you will be, so I just wanna make sure that they know.

Growing up in a small, rural community, Rosa did not realize the severity of issues involving immigration and one's legal status. With time and a deeper understanding of how race/ethnicity and immigration operate in society, Rosa was aware of the reality that her father could one day be stereotyped. As such she felt it was important for her to ensure that her parents were both aware of their rights should a situation ever arise. Furthermore, as both her parents were permanent residents, she recalled helping her parents go through the renewal process for their green cards. Because one of her older sisters forgot to write down the password and security questions, Rosa's mother had to speak to an immigration agent to recover this information. In hopes of facilitating a much smoother process for her mother, Rosa spent hours creating a worksheet that had important information that she could reference during her phone call and then sat with her mother for two hours to practice how she would respond to the agent's questions. Rosa described interactions with immigration agents as "very scary" and "very mean" and knowing full well that one simple mistake had the power to affect one's case. She recalled being there with her mother while she made the call and stated:

...I was very encouraging to my mom because I feel like she doubts herself a lot and—cause she gets scared right? When you don't know how to write or read and you don't even know the language, you get very scared when it comes to these things, especially when it's your status. So, I was very encouraging with her and you know I kept telling her You can do it. It's okay. I'm gonna be whispering in your ear and if anything happens you can just say I'm sorry I messed up. Don't be afraid, these are normal things that you're gonna go through, and...we ended up calling and I whispered in her ear everything and you know my forms of approval that she got it right I'd be like Yeah you got it right. I'd be like Keep going. Pointing at the worksheet that I made for her and everything. And then I told my sisters I was like Okay once...we get the password, you guys are helping her with the rest cause I...was up for five hours helping her with it and they're like Okay good. And then...we got the password and my mom was very happy, very relieved she started crying. And then my sister stepped in and they start helping her, but they...did not know how to help her cause they felt very—they just expected her to know these things rather than it's like you. I had to create a worksheet for her in order for her to be able to get through a phone call you know, and then my mom was just like, I don't want your help. I want [Rosa]. Make [Rosa] come back. So, I had to help her get through the rest of the process and everything cause I feel like I have more of a patience. But I kept telling my sister after I was like When you help mom or dad you gotta remember that, I hate using this word, but they're very remedial. You cannot expect them to know these things that for us are a secondhand type of thing because it's like we've been going to school for how long? We know the language. We know how to navigate these things and they don't. For them it's a scary situation. So, I guess now I'm just the designated helper for those things cause...my mom feels more comfortable with me helping her. But...in my mind I understand how scary it is and how difficult it is and everything.

Taking the time to practice with her mother was important for Rosa because she knew it was very serious and tied to her mother's immigration status. She also knew that in that situation her mother would be nervous and perhaps doubt herself when speaking to the agent. As Rosa recalled, she provided a lot of moral support in reminding her mother that she could do it.

Though Rosa had initially figured that her sisters could help with the rest of the process once they successfully secured the login information, it became pretty clear that her sisters did not possess the same level of patience that she did so she had to step in once more to finish up the process. Her sister had expected their mother to already know how to do certain things and that simply was not the case. Rosa explained to her older sister that while some of these tasks seemed trivial and second nature, they were not that way for their parents who did not speak English and

who did not receive any kind of formal education in the U.S. This issue of legal status was also brought up by one mother, Señora Fernandez, who admitted that her child Diana has encouraged her multiple times to take classes to learn English and to work on obtaining her citizenship. In the same way that she described always encouraging her children to do things, her children have now done the same with her.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** Though I highlighted countless examples of parents demonstrating their support while students were in college, students expressed several challenges they experienced along the way. Some individual responses of challenges included wishing that parents could provide more financial assistance, wanting parents to take initiative in asking questions about college and being involved in the academic aspect of their life, and struggling with their parents in the beginning to keep noise levels at a minimum in order to concentrate on work.

The majority of students expressed the same general challenge of their parents not having the knowledge to guide them through college and being unable to provide academic support. Part of this challenge had to do with students not having the language capabilities to be able to translate certain aspects of college and the other part had to do with parents not being able to understand the process of something so foreign to them that it sometimes did not even matter if it was explained well to them. As such, students like Lorena and Rosa admitted that it would be so much easier if their parents spoke English in order to fully convey their thoughts and emotions.

For example, Lorena acknowledged:

...it would've been nice to be able to talk about them some of the academic stuff that goes on cause sometimes when I'm translating, I'll look at my sister and I'll ask her How would you describe that? or How would you talk about this? And I also...feel bad because they'll look at each other and...they'll tell me like I don't understand what you're saying, but you can keep going and it's just like Damn I wish I'd be able to just talk to you kind of about it.



As Lorena recalled, the process of translating academic related content in Spanish and in a way that was easily accessible to their parents was a difficult task. She often looked to her sister for support in trying to communicate certain aspects to them. As she stated, she wished that she would be able to talk to them about it. For Rosa, she discussed this issue more in terms of her parents not understanding student loans and the importance of internships. She noted:

...being a first gen student, you have to figure out a lot of things on your own. Even though my sisters did do it before me, school changes so fast that what some things apply to me no longer apply to them so it's like I also have to figure it out and then sometimes getting that parental support or advice that you might think might help you, guide you in the direction, but they can't do that cause they don't understand the system. They don't know you know so I guess in that way. I guess I got more of that.

As a first-generation student, Rosa expressed having to figure out many things for herself because her parents did not understand how to navigate the system. Though she was fortunate to have sisters that accumulated navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) from when they had gone through college and passed this knowledge via their familial capital to Cynthia, the fact remained that colleges are always changing and updated their system, policies, and procedures. As a result, having family members who went through the system may not always be as helpful as one might think it would be. Furthermore, younger siblings like Rosa end up having to navigate the system by themselves in ways reminiscent to what their older siblings had to do when they were the first ones to navigate college. While students expressed not receiving academic support from their parents, most of them recognized that their parents could not know the system because they did not receive schooling in the U.S., nor did they receive many years of formal education in their respective countries. They did well to recognize this and also recognized and appreciated the support that parents were able to offer. Some students commented that all they needed from their parents was love and support because they could get the academic support from other people on

campus. As Elena said, “the support that [WCU] gives and the support that other people give...it makes up for it you know? They give me the blessings, the love, and support that I need and that's all I need you know.”

Beyond the general consensus about academic support, two students brought up the fact that their parents did not understand the importance of mental health. As someone who talked about openly about her anxiety, Reyna recalled several instances growing up when her family would make fun of her because she was scared of everything. It was not until later when she went to therapy that she looked back at those childhood instances and recognized them as signs that something was not okay, but to her family, it was nothing more than a joke. Reyna did note that her parents did not express any objection to her seeking therapy and became more aware of how her anxiety affected her. Still, her father suggested that she try going to church to feel better. Meanwhile, Diana talked openly about their depression and how difficult it was to talk to her family about it. They recalled that they had been contemplating going on antidepressants and that their family adamantly expressed that it was all in their head. They provided further context for their conversations with their family about this issue. They stated:

I try to make it something that we talk about just because I know that it should be talked about, and it's not talked about especially in Latino homes. But it's usually just me and my mom talking and then she'll listen, but then she'll hit me with the like, Oh, I don't really understand why you're sad. I give you everything. You make me feel like everything that I do is not enough. And I'm like, Okay, now I feel bad for even having said this, but I can't take it back cause that's how I feel. And then my dad is always just super quiet and he's just like, Oh, you just have to pray. And I'm just like, I can't do that even if I wanted to. I went to church with them and they thought I was gonna be healed or something and which whatever if...you have your religion that's cool, but it just—I feel like they try to fix mental health with religion.

According to Diana, mental health is something that is not talked about in Latino households which is why they intentionally bring up this issue, especially to their mother. Not understanding what depression was, Diana's mother simply chalked it up to being sad and

questioned what Diana had to be sad about if she gives them everything. Rather than being affirmed in their response and continuing the conversation, Diana felt bad for even bringing it up in the first place. Their parents were firm believers that the solution to their depression was prayer and religion. In fact, she recalled going to church with them as their parents believed this would heal them. As you may recall from the first theme, most of the students' parents grew up in religious households and continued to be strong in their faith within their own families. Yet, less than half of the students described holding similarly strong faith backgrounds as their parents.

Lastly, two students brought up some of the challenges they faced in demonstrating support to their parents. As I previously mentioned, students provided instrumental amounts of assistance with translating, filling out paperwork/forms, paying bills, and showing them how to use technology. However, the process of performing these tasks was described as challenging for several reasons. For Anahi, one challenge involved the fact that, as she stated, "my parents always demand a lot." She recalled being in a car accident with her father and her father wanting her to be present during all of the meetings with lawyers, despite the fact that she was not at home, had classes, and had work to do. During these moments of support, Anahi described that her father would often become frustrated or upset with her. Having to go to the courtroom with her parents, Anahi did gain an understanding of courtroom procedures such as needing to take a number and getting a form from one of the clerks. Another challenge for Anahi involved the mere act of translating because it meant that her Spanish had to be good enough to translate into English. She recalled her parents always telling her "...O ve hazlo [Oh go do it] and they say Oh it's easy for you to do it because you speak English." While her parents were under the impression that it was easy for her to navigate this process and go speak to others because she knew

English, Anahi confessed that it was actually very difficult for her. One point of frustration for Karen involved when her parents would ask her for help with documents even though they were already translated into Spanish. She recalled one particular moment with her father:

...there was this form that the Medi-Cal sent. It was in Spanish and it was directed to my dad...and it was in Spanish and I told him and he wanted me to fill it out that day we got it and I was like No it's in Spanish you fill it out the next day. He's like Okay, I will do it. So here comes the next day and then at night...I was doing my homework he's like So I don't know how busy you are but I came kinda tired can...I don't know if I wanna do the questionnaire so he was like Do you wanna help me do it? and I'm like Are you kidding me? How can I help? It's in Spanish. There's no translation at all whatsoever. He's like Yeah but I was feeling tired so and I was like Okay let me do it then and I will just read it to you, and you answer so like I [emphasis] ended up doing it...

While her father first stated that he would fill out the form himself, he proceeded to ask Karen for help the next day saying that he was too tired from work that day. Even though Karen was doing homework, she agreed to help him out and filled out the form as she asked him questions. She described moments like this as minor distractions, which she said happened often. Anahi similarly felt frustrated because her parents often asked her to do things in the moment even though they saw that she was busy doing something.

**Counterstories: Family-student relationships.** Not only did students express positive relationships with their parents, but they also expressed positive relationships with siblings, cousins, and grandparents. For students, they had expressed that these relationships became stronger during college or continued to remain strong from before. For those that became stronger, life circumstances such as living in a separate space, going to college, becoming more mature, and having a child were some of the reasons that prompted this shift. Even those relationships that were positive beforehand became much stronger while students were in college. When Cynthia's sister Sara described their relationship she stated, "she comes over, we have our favorite shows that we watch together, and I won't watch them until she comes back

home and we definitely have a kinship and an admiration for each other too.” When I asked Cynthia about her relationship with her sisters she mentioned, “I definitely say that my sisters are probably like...my moms.” I go to them whenever I need help with anything but they're also my friends, you know.” Both sisters later discussed talking every day to one another, in addition to their other sister, niece, and cousins as a way to keep in contact with one another. As Sara described it, it was their “real time support system.” Though Nayeli and Victoria were not close in high school, they became much closer when they both had children. Victoria expressed her thoughts on why this was the case and stated, “We’re super close now and then we can relate because we’re both...parents. We both kinda help each other and seek each other’s advice in different aspects.” With Victoria and her son moving in with Nayeli, both sisters supported one another through childcare and taking turns with household responsibilities. Having younger siblings, Elena had to get creative with how to communicate and relate to them. For example, she created a Snapchat account to communicate with her two teenage sisters. She also noted that they were slowly starting to reach out to her via text. She mentioned not speaking often to her two younger brothers, but always having that connection with them when she visited home. Once she was home, she would always ask about school and she would tell them that she loved them.

The majority of students communicated with their older siblings at least once a day via texting, Snapchat, or Instagram with communication being reciprocated across students and siblings. Students were a lot more willing to go deeper with siblings and talk to them about things that they might not be as forthcoming about with their parents. A couple of older siblings such as Sara and Esmeralda discussed coming into town to visit with their sister on more than one occasion. Since Sara and Cynthia had a cousin that also went to WCU, the three of them would get together when Sara was in town.

Three students, Elena, Reyna, and Nayeli talked about maintaining communication with their grandparents. Elena described a good relationship with her grandma who would ask her how her studies were going. Knowing she would not understand, Elena kept things at a superficial level and would say things were going well. She commented that her grandmother would brag to others that her granddaughter was at a university. During her time at WCU, Reyna visited her grandparents in Mexico for their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. At that point, her grandmother had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and experienced moments in which she was unable to recognize Reyna. Towards the end of her trip, Reyna's grandmother experienced a lucid moment and recalled several memories from when she took care of Reyna as a child. As you may recall from earlier, Reyna had lived with her grandparents in Mexico for several years while her parents worked in the U.S. In that moment, she told Reyna, "those moments might not be here anymore but they're gonna be here forever." She remembered going to the bathroom and sobbing uncontrollably. She admitted later on that there was a period of time when her grandmother was first diagnosed with Alzheimer's that she did not speak to her grandparents. She described this period as being too emotional to deal with and taking a toll on her mental health. However, since graduating from WCU, she has made more of an effort to reach out to them. I include this story here to show just how important her grandmother was to her and to honor her grandmother's spirit within this work. When I asked Reyna if there was a pseudonym she wanted to choose, she immediately chose "Reyna" because that was her grandmother's nickname. She told me that it was important for her to take advantage of any opportunity to include her grandmother in her life and in her school trajectory and, as such, wanted to include her in this process in some way. Though Reyna noted that it has become more difficult to speak with her grandmother, she has been able to continue to communicate with her grandfather via

video chat a couple of times a week. Before her grandfather had this phone, she was only able to communicate with him about once a month.

While I detailed in the community college section that Nayeli had described a difficult relationship with her grandmother, she expressed that her relationship with her had gotten better since moving out. Nayeli believed that this was partly due to the fact that she had a child which she felt made her understand why her grandparents might have been strict with her growing up. Furthermore, her grandmother had a soft spot for her daughter whom she loved dearly. It was clear that Nayeli had much more communication with her grandfather as she often spoke to him about college, even though she knew he did not understand any of it. Rather than have her daughter watch TV or play games by herself while she was working, Nayeli preferred to visit her grandparents every weekend so they could be around her.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** Whereas most students described positive relationships with siblings, Elena and Diana both discussed having difficult relationships with their sisters that made it hard to communicate and relate to them. Elena described wanting to be a good sister to her sister who was the closest to her in age. She recalled many efforts (e.g., bringing her to campus and buying her SAT books) to motivate her and inspire her to go to college. She described the toll it took for her to because she was wasting her money and limited resources on someone when she could have been using it on herself. Though she wanted to be there for her siblings to “inspire them” and “show them the path they need to follow” she realized that she did not have the time to do that, especially with her sister who did not seem to appreciate any of Elena’s efforts. At the time of our second interview, Elena commented that she had not spoken to her sister after she did not show up to her graduation ceremony. Another cause of anxiety for Elena involved receiving phone calls from her mother who would tell her that her

sister was not doing well in school or misbehaving. She described experiencing the following thoughts, “I would just think in my head like Man well what can I do? How can I be there for them? I can't be there every day to tell them behave, do this... it'll just be too much. I wouldn't be able to focus on school.” As such she decided that the only thing she could do was be there for her sister if she reached out. Throughout the interview, she often stated that external things were outside of her control and that she recognized that she could only do so much. Her boyfriend was always there to remind her, “How are you trying to save others from drowning when you're drowning yourself?” Remembering this, Elena would take a pause to assess how she was doing and whether she had the capacity to help her family. Diana also experienced similar frustrations with their parents about the responsibility that was placed on their shoulders with regard to their brother. Diana recalled one time when their parents had been upset with them for not reminding their brother about his housing application that was due. It was particularly frustrating for Diana to hear this as they recalled:

It's not my job to hold his hand through the whole process. No one held my hand. I did that shit all on my own. So, I'm here as a resource that he can ask questions to when he's tried already to get through it, but he hasn't done shit. I'm not gonna do it for him.

Similar to Elena, Diana expressed that it was not their responsibility to do things for their brother and was very adamant that he needed to be checking his email and portal. Diana's parents also blamed them for their brother's choices, often citing Diana as a bad influence.

***Disconnection with Family.*** A couple of students noted not having particularly close relationships with cousins or experiencing difficulties in connecting with them while they were enrolled in college. Elena explained how difficult it was to relate to her cousins because they were at different levels than her. She gave the example of them being together at family functions thinking about cars or their phones, while she was there thinking about the social



dynamics of the room in which they were in and how men and women sat separate from each other. She described how difficult it was for her to not think so critically sometimes and has reconciled this by reminding herself to just be with her family and have fun. Cynthia was in a similar, yet slightly different situation with her cousins. Though she did not believe that the schools her cousins attended were “lesser than,” she admitted that she felt as though the academic rigor between schools was different as two attended a community college and one attended a CSU. It was difficult for her to describe the challenges she was facing at WCU because her cousins did not think college was difficult for them so they could not understand why she was struggling as much as she was. Describing another situation with a different cousin, Cynthia mentioned talking with a cousin who dropped out of college and was working full time. He mentioned to her how much he was making and eluded to the fact that she too could be making money but instead she decided to go to college. As such, she felt that some people in her family thought college was a waste of time. For Anahi, there was an intense disconnection with some of her tías [aunts] who felt that Anahi thought she was better than everyone else because she went to WCU. She believed they made these comments not because she had actually changed but because she was not able to attend events as she previously had done.

**Grandparents.** While Nayeli described having a better relationship with her grandparents, all of the anecdotes she gave about them, particularly her grandmother, led me to believe that the relationship was in fact very strained between them. She described that they treated her like a little kid and were “old school” and adhered to “Mexican tradition.” When I asked what she meant by this she gave an example of how they did not approve of her texting and threatened to take her phone away from her even though she was the one that paid for it. She confessed that she hardly communicated with her grandmother because she always feared she

would say the wrong thing and was always upset at her. Her grandmother was very protective of Nayeli's daughter and made constant remarks about how she was a bad mother and did not care for her daughter. She expressed feeling as though her schooling had negatively affected her relationship with her grandmother because she could never meet her standards.

**Gender.** Nayeli also described feeling as though her grandparents treated her and her brother differently. Her brother did not have to ask for permission to go in and out, but she was not extended the same freedom. When she pressed her grandparents why she was not allowed to go out, they told her it was because she had a daughter. Though Nayeli agreed that it made sense, she also admitted that they acted the same way even when she did not have a child. Though she did not expressly state that this was due to the fact she was a woman, her realization seemed to suggest that there might be something else going on besides having a child.

Though Diana believed they had a better relationship with their brother, they noted a particular struggle in the way their brother often made degrading and objectifying comments about women. Diana was always quick to point out these comments and turned them into teaching moments so that he could understand why it was not appropriate to make such comments. As a Chicana studies minor, Diana gained knowledge and used this to teach their brother how to treat women better. They discussed other common situations in which he would regularly sit down and wait for his mother to serve him food. In one such instance, Diana described being quick to point out that he has "working hands" and can do it himself. Diana challenged this and expressed that he should be doing things for his wife as well. Yet, Diana's mother conceded that she does not have a problem with it because she does not know if his future wife will do these things for him. Still, Diana expressed their disagreement and told their brother to grab his own plate. Similarly, Nayeli described having a difficult relationship with her

brother as they were the complete opposites. She recalled one of the main points of contention between them being the way he talked about women. Though she recalled confronting him at least in one particular occasion, he made a joke out of it, which seemed to solidify for her that there was no sense in trying to talk to him about it.

**Counterstories: Family-student support.** When I asked students to describe the support they received from family members, examples extended beyond parents to siblings, cousins, partners, grandparents, and tíos/tías [uncles/aunts]. Even one parent, Señora Rodriguez, described the way her larger family supported Elena throughout her time in college. As she described it:

—aquí con [Elena] estábamos toda la familia porque todos—pos es primera generación. Ella es la primera que va a la universidad y pos todos, Gracias a Dios, todos...la apoyaban. Le hablaban si ocupas ayuda aquí estamos...También fue una de las claves...la familia que...pos también den el apoyo. Den el apoyo los tíos, las tías, los primos, las primas. También los hermanos también es una clave también. [—here with [Elena] was the whole family because everyone—well, she is first generation. She is the first to go to a university and well, everyone, Thank God, everyone...supported her. They would call her and would say they were there if she needed help. It was also one of the keys...family...well, that they also give support. That her uncles, aunts, and cousins give support. Also support from her siblings is key as well.].

Señora Rodriguez described that an essential part of Elena's college experience was the support she received from her siblings and extended family who were always there to support her in any way. She noted that this was particularly important given that she was the first in the family to go to a university. When Elena had her graduation celebration, all of her cousins and tíos/tías [uncles/aunts] were in attendance and she specifically recalled seeing her younger cousins beam at her with pride. This demonstration of support in showing up to graduation ceremonies was also expressed by Reyna. Because Reyna's mother had recently given Reyna's grandfather a phone and installed WhatsApp, her mother was able to video chat him so that he could see her Chicana Studies graduation ceremony. Reyna was able to talk to her grandfather afterwards and

she described how surreal it was to see him crying of joy and pride. Up until that point, she had never seen her grandfather cry.

Some individual examples of support ranged from helping students move in, meeting up to spend time together, encouraging them to prioritize their mental health, picking them up from campus to take them home for the weekend, encouraging them to speak up to parents, and providing emotional support. As Nayeli was the only student with a child of her own and had recently suggested to her sister that she and her son move in with her, Nayeli was able to count on Victoria for support. As such, Victoria looked after Nayeli's daughter and took turns around the house with the cooking and cleaning. Nayeli also received a lot of help from her grandparents. Rather than have her daughter play with toys all day or watch TV, Nayeli preferred to visit her grandparents every weekend, which meant that her grandparents could watch her daughter while she did homework. Both her sister and grandfather were also helpful in picking up her daughter from preschool. Her grandparents often provided financial assistance in the form of groceries or helping with last minute expenses such as fixing a flat tire. Two older siblings, Esmeralda and Sara, brought up similar support of helping their younger sisters financially. Specifically, for Esmeralda, she knew that her parents had limited financial resources, so she often checked in with Rosa to see if she needed money for groceries or other necessities.

Just like parents, siblings were largely responsible for providing moral support in the shape of encouragement and advice. Cynthia recalled a conversation she had with her sister early on in college where she wanted to switch out of her pre-med track. Her sister Sara told her:

...[Cynthia] relax, okay. Take a deep breath. She was more so kind of telling me You can do this. Don't give up on being a doctor. She was like Don't give up. You can do this. It sounds hard but you can do it, you just have to push.

Although Cynthia would eventually switch out of that major, this encouragement she received from her sister served as a motivating factor in continuing to press forward on the pre-med track for a few more weeks. In addition to the practical support Victoria provided to Nayeli, she also provided moral and emotional support. Living with Nayeli, and noticing when she was stressed, Victoria tried to “de-stress” her. She said, “sometimes you know when you’re overwhelmed, you’re like Oh I’m doing a terrible job even though you’re not, you’re just feeling that way. I’ll be like No you’re doing a great job. You’re doing a lot more than other people.” Having talked to Nayeli she was in fact juggling many responsibilities including her roles as a student, mother, daughter, and granddaughter. In fact, she regularly felt like she was neglecting her daughter and not spending enough time with her daughter. Luckily, Nayeli received a lot of support from her sister.

The four students in this study who had younger siblings commonly described wanting to be role models for them. Three of these students believed their siblings supported them simply by existing and being another reason to motivate them to do well in school and accomplish their goals. As Diana put it:

My brother, I would say he just...gives me motivation and he's just a constant reminder that even if I don't want people to look up to me, I don't have that choice. He's gonna look up to me and that's why I need to set a good example. And so...he kinda helps me just stay—not get too off track or too messed up somewhere.

For Karen and Reyna, their desire to be good role models was connected to their belief that their younger siblings had the potential to be bigger than them and do even greater things. As Karen commented:

And with my sister, I mean she’s just there...I guess just because she’s younger than me and I want her to do better than I did, I guess that encourages me to do good in school and to be a role model for her just cause I don’t want her to go up to another path that she shouldn’t be going to...

Though Yosso (2006) primarily described aspirational capital in terms of the high aspirations Latinx parents had for their children, we see here similar high aspirations from students to their younger siblings.

For the three students who had older siblings with college degrees, they received support from them in the form of words of advice and academic support. For Rosa, this meant being advised by her sister Esmeralda to join organizations or start her own club so that she can be involved throughout college. Esmeralda also checked in with Rosa about school and grades and offered to review any of her research papers. For Lorena, this meant asking her sister how to physically navigate campus and gather her opinions about what classes to take and life. Because Lorena's sister had graduated from WCU, she was able to pass on the navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) she had acquired to help Lorena move through the university. At the start of our second interview, Lorena shared that she left our first interview in a state of reflection about the extent of her family's support throughout her life. She further detailed how the day before our second interview, she had gone to breakfast with her family and recounted the first interview she had with me. Lorena described how she broke down into tears in front of her family as she realized the privileged position she was in by always having had their support. With tear-soaked eyes she recounted her conversations with her sister:

I also got emotional talking to my sister telling her about how grateful I am for her, especially since she had to go through so many of these experiences by herself and how we weren't able to help her, and how she was able to help me, especially now, since a lot of what I'm going through, she also went through....

According to Lorena, her sister was someone who struggled to articulate her emotions and was caught off guard by this moment and did not know what to say. Nevertheless, Lorena recalled that her sister embraced her and said, "you're welcome." For Lorena, it was important for her to verbally express to her sister how grateful she was to have her support and her recognition that it

must have been even more difficult for her sister to navigate college on her own. For Cynthia, this meant having much older sisters who she could ask about how to “baby adult” while in college. Additionally, she described receiving a tremendous amount of support through a group chat with her two older sisters, her sister’s daughter, and two cousins.

So yeah, we have a huge group chat with all of us and honestly, I feel like that’s been—and we’ve always said Ugh this group chat is awesome because it’s literally a huge group chat of support. Whenever one of us is going through something tough we put it in there, and everyone will just send the good energy you know. I’ll be like Ugh I got three midterms this week. I’m struggling and they’ll be like You got this. Go to the library. Stop messing around [laughs] and get your stuff together....I just recently signed a lease on my first apartment [laughs] and so I was asking How do I split up the rent? How do I talk money with my friends? So, I asked them, and they totally told me this is how you should do it and blah blah blah. So even though I don’t talk to them on the phone daily we talk literally every day through this group chat and it’s awesome. It’s an awesome group chat [laughs].

Through this group chat, Cynthia was able to receive a lot of virtual support and encouragement. It was a place for her to ask questions and keep her family up to date about what she had going on. Luckily, one of her cousins from the chat actually attended WCU as a PhD student so she was also there to provide in person support for Cynthia. She recalled the following about her cousin:

...she definitely helped me a lot too in the sense that she was the only one that was here so she would always let me come over to her little studio when she lived here and I would hang out over there and watch Netflix or whenever she was out of town she’d text and be like Hey I left you my key if you need some alone time, if you need to just go relax on your own cause I lived in a triple so it was like Uhhhh [laughs]. Yeah so, she’s like...go, I left the key for you, and she would let me sleep there. She’d let me have the place to myself. So, I think having her and also her being someone who is also navigating this system, her being able to say Hey...I get you. I’m here. I’m doing it. I’ve done it. I totally understand where you’re coming from, where you’re struggling, what you’re struggling with. I think even just getting that affirmation that I was valid in my struggle was really helpful too and to see how far she made it was like Okay, I can do this [laughs].

Because Cynthia’s cousin had her own studio located in graduate housing near campus, Cynthia was easily able to access this space whenever she needed to whether to hang out with her cousin

or enjoy the studio to herself. Having her cousin close by and knowing that she was also navigating higher education at the graduate level, offered Cynthia the affirmation and reassurance that she too could do college. Cynthia was not the only person to express support from cousins. Elena commented that her cousins, younger and older, came out to support her at her graduation and graduation celebration. Finally, Anahi recalled regularly receiving support and encouragement from her cousins. Whenever her cousins introduce her, they say:

...this is my cousin. She goes to [WCU]. She's really smart. She's also like, Tell them what scholarship you got. And then I was like Stop [embarrassed laughter]. And they're like No tell them, I'm really proud of you. And I appreciate that, hearing it from them because they're my family as well. And they're people that I like. I love. I genuinely love. So, they're always bragging and I'm like, Oh, thank you and I like they're support. And I know sometimes I'm like, Oh, I am really having a difficult time at [WCU]. I remember transitioning in and they're like You got this, I believe in you...you'll find your people there. You'll find your community there as well.

As was evident in the quote, Anahi's cousins were very proud of her for attending WCU and for having received a prestigious scholarship that paid in full her college related expenses. They took every opportunity to brag about her to others. Her cousins were also there to encourage her during the difficult moments she experienced at WCU.

As the only student who was married in the group, Reyna described how supportive her partner was throughout her time at WCU. Because her partner had graduated from WCU, he had first-hand experience with understanding what it meant to be a student there and how to best support her when she was feeling stressed. She described her partner as someone who was always celebrating her little victories. Additionally, he provided endless amounts of emotional support, particularly in her most challenging moments. As she recalled:

I think that without his help I don't know that I would've graduated...sometimes... I wanted to give up and he was kinda like the more positive side of me. When he saw me all stressed out crying, he was like You can do it. It's okay. You're gonna have these days...he would help me see myself in the future.



According to Reyna, her partner provided an instrumental amount of support while she was a student at WCU so much so that she believed she would not have been able to graduate without him. During moments of doubt and wanting to give up, Reyna's partner was always there to remind her that she could do it and that there would be better days ahead once she graduated. Additionally, Reyna suffered from anxiety and similarly relied on her partner to help her cope.

***Bi-directional support.*** Students also did their part to demonstrate reciprocity by showing up for various family members through emotionally and morally supporting siblings and cousins, financially supporting siblings and cousins, supporting a sibling's college wishes, and allowing a sibling to use their car to go to school and work. For example, just as much as Cynthia received moral support from her sisters and cousins, Cynthia also reciprocated this same support in being everyone else's cheerleader. She also regularly engaged in advice sessions with her older sister. Nayeli and Rosa also provided advice for their older sisters, while Reyna gave advice to her younger sister. On a more serious note, Elena recalled being an emotional support for one of her younger sisters who had been concerned about their parents being deported. Around that time, the U.S. had seen an increase in deportations and court ordered arrests. She remembered the conversation she had with her sister:

And my sister...texted me through Snapchat....saying like, Hey, I'm worried. I saw on the news that they're deporting people. I'm scared...I'm like, don't be scared. My parents they're not affected by it. Just be safe and know your rights and I just sent her a screenshot of the rights that we have and she's like, Okay.

Though Elena confessed to me that she was also concerned for her parents, there was no trace of that fear in her response to her younger sibling, which was most likely intentional so as to minimize any sense of panic. Elena reassured her that there was nothing to worry about for their parents. Elena still sent her sister know your rights information so that she could be equipped with that information if she were to ever need it.

Knowing that her older sister Victoria was having roommate problems, Nayeli offered for Victoria and her son to move in with her and her daughter into family housing. Because they lived together, Nayeli helped to watch her nephew and pick him up occasionally from school. They established a routine where they took turns to cook meals and clean around the apartment. Nayeli often took the time to encourage Victoria “to go further” and was there to offer moral support along the way. She also sent Victoria job opportunities and financial resources to take advantage of. In this way, Nayeli utilized the navigational capital (Yosso, 2006) she acquired through attending community college and WCU as a single parent and shared these resources with her sister who was also navigating community college as a single parent.

**Tensions, challenges, and contradictions.** While I demonstrated many examples of support above, the realities for students were marked with a number of difficulties that brought up many frustrations for students. For Nayeli, one of her biggest challenges was that her grandparents did not understand what it meant for her to be in school. This meant that they expected her to clean up around the house and to cook even though she had a lot of work to do. It also meant not understanding how long it took to write papers or complete homework assignments. Her grandma regularly expressed that she was always on her laptop all day and not doing any work. On the other hand, Nayeli commented on the fact that her grandmother always kept her awards displayed around the house, which signaled to her that her grandmother was proud of her accomplishments. Nayeli further stated that her grandparents always wanted her to do everything with them, which she did not mind in and of itself, but confessed that it did take time away from work. During our second interview, Nayeli brought up that her grandmother had recently become sick, which meant she was responsible for a few more tasks around the house such as water hosing the cement, picking up dog poop, doing the bed, and vacuuming. Having

been enrolled in summer classes during this time, Nayeli expressed feeling as though she was falling behind with school. Furthermore, because her brother moved in with their grandparents, Nayeli no longer had a room to stay in when she visited on the weekends so her and her daughter slept in the same bed as her grandmother. Though she recognized on some level the difficulties she experienced with her grandparents, particularly her grandmother, she also recognized that she could count on them to watch her daughter and provide financial support. Nayeli acknowledged that the support outweighed any of the challenges that came with continuing the relationship she had with her grandparents. Nayeli's relationship with her grandmother, more so than any other relationship students had with parents, truly reflected the many contradictions that can exist within family relationships.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### Discussion of Research Questions

#### RQ 1: Familial Messages about Education and College

The first question guiding this study was “What messages do Latina/x college students receive from their family about education and pursuing a college degree? How have these messages shaped their educational trajectories? I included the word family as I purposefully wanted to capture examples that extended beyond just parents.

**The transmission of education across generations.** Among the parents interviewed, most of them recalled personal childhoods filled with messages about the importance of education and parents wanting more for their lives. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on educación (i.e., religion, humility, and respect) as accompanying the formal education that took place in schools. Due to the poverty experienced by their families, parents were not afforded the opportunity to continue their education. Almost all of them had no other choice but to stop going to school and support their families by working and/or taking care of their siblings. This was the case despite the fact that most parents reported receiving positive messages about education. Scholars such as Ibarra (2004) and Baca Zinn (2016) have noted the continued use of stereotypes that depict the Latino family as upholding a rigid and traditional patriarchal system that places women in subordinate roles. The complicated reality is that a couple of mothers did speak about their fathers cutting their education short because they thought they might get pregnant at school and/or patriarchal beliefs relegating women to the roles of being a wife and mother. This finding supports previous research that has documented the responsibility placed on some Latinas to fulfill household duties and care for siblings (Harklau, 2013; Ibarra, 2004; Liang et al., 2017). Though this was one of many tensions that I uncovered in my findings, I challenge the notion

that patriarchy is an inherent cultural trait of the Latino community. Furthermore, it is important to note that none of the 10 students in the study mentioned ever receiving messages from parents that limited their educational pursuits because of their gender. As such, we see the transformation of messages across generations confirming the notion that beliefs and relationships are not static and evolve over time (Riessman, 1993).

The notion of educación present throughout parents' childhoods continued to be transmitted across generations as they inculcated these values in their own children. It was important for parents to teach their children important values in the home that they could then take with them into their schools where they also gained expertise in different subjects. Consistent with previous research (Delgado Bernal, 2001, 2002; McAllister, 2012; Moje & Martinez, 2007; Molinary, 2007; Peralta et al., 2013; Perez et al., 2015), the parents in the study viewed education as necessary to gain access to jobs that did not require the use of physical labor (e.g., housecleaning, groundskeeping, and field work). Furthermore, it was not lost upon parents that education could provide opportunities to escape poverty (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007; Leyva, 2011). Confirming the work of Rios-Aguilar and Deil-Amen (2012), parents in my study held high aspirations for their children to get ahead in life and transmitted these aspirations through sharing their education and migration stories so that their children would be motivated to continue to pursue their education through college. This process of passing on knowledge, memories, and stories is reflective of Yosso's (2006) notion of familial capital. These findings support previous research that has demonstrated that Latino parents encourage their children to go to college despite not having obtained many years of formal education (Auerbach, 2006; Cavazos et al., 2010; Ceja 2004; Gonzales, 2012; Kirk et al., 2011; Yosso, 2006). Students also received explicit and implicit (e.g., attending college graduation ceremonies) messages

(McAllister, 2012) about the importance of education and college from older siblings (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Fulgini et al., 2007; McAllister, 2012; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014), cousins, and grandparents who held high aspirations for students. Many of these older siblings and cousins were there to pave the way for younger generations and held high aspirations for students (Yosso, 2006).

Outside of parents making explicit remarks about attending college and sharing their stories, three students discussed the implicit messages they received by observing their mothers' financial dependence on men. As such, they were motivated to obtain a college degree so that they would be self-sufficient and not struggle financially. One of the contradictions present throughout participant narratives was that students and parents reported differing accounts about the extent to which they talked about college. Specifically, parents believed they frequently engaged students in conversations while students believed these conversations were minimal. One possibility for this discrepancy may reflect parents' beliefs that by telling students they needed to go to college this constituted "talking about college." Meanwhile, students may have taken "talking about college" to mean conversations about what college was and how to get there. Of course, this latter interpretation was made more difficult by the fact that the majority of parents were unfamiliar with the U.S. K-12 and higher education systems.

Scholars such as Valencia and Black (2002) and Kiyama and Harper (2015) have documented the persistent belief that Latino parents do not value education and therefore are unsupportive of their children's education. Yet, my findings challenge this belief as it was very clear that parents valued education. This was due in part to their first-hand knowledge that their children's futures would be severely limited without obtaining a college degree, as this would mean facing similar harsh realities of navigating this world with minimal economic resources.

Overall, this examination of parents' personal experiences related to education, immigration, and occupation provide a necessary context to understand parents' aspirations for their children (Langenkamp, 2019).

## **RQ 2: Role of Family in Students' Educational Journeys**

The second question guiding this study was "What is the role of family within Latina/x students' educational trajectories?" To capture the role of family, I focused on relationships between students and family members as well as the bi-directional support present within these relationships.

**K-12 familial support and involvement.** Students saw their parents as providing whatever support was in their means to provide. Though most of the students came from low-income families, parents worked hard to make sure they had a roof over their head, food to eat, clothes to wear, and supplies for school. For parents in the study, support took on the form of providing transportation, encouragement, and emotional support. Participant narratives often illuminated the great lengths that parents were willing to go to show that they were there for their children and cared about their education. Encouragement and emotional support were most reflected through parents' transmission of *consejos*, a form of support conceptualized as familial capital (Yosso, 2006). Less than half of the students in the study discussed that their parents attended parent teacher conferences. Several parents shared stories of helping students with homework, while those who were unable to help expressed leveraging their social and familial capital (Yosso, 2006) to provide students with additional help to be able to complete their homework. Furthermore, student narratives exemplified the many ways that they themselves supported their parents. Examples of support included providing emotional support, engaging in translation of documents and conversations, writing checks, and helping a parent study for their

citizenship exam. These examples reflect the many lived experiences of Latino families navigating issues of citizenship, generational status, and language (Villalpando, 2004). In addition to parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents, and a tío were instrumental in providing emotional, financial, and moral support. Older siblings and cousins passed on the navigational and social capital (Yosso, 2006) they had accumulated throughout their own educational experiences and transmitted this knowledge in the form of familial capital (Yosso, 2006) to help fill in the gaps (e.g., academic support, checking grades, and extracurricular encouragement) from what parents were unable to provide. Additionally, those students in the study who were the oldest in their family expressed wanting to be role models for their younger siblings and engaged in a similar process of using the navigational and social capital (Yosso, 2006) they gained to help support them in their educational experiences. They all discussed the high aspirations they had for their siblings to achieve even greater things than they were able to achieve.

The term familismo has often been used to describe Latinos as putting family (immediate and extended) first, over and above one's personal needs (Cauce & Domenech Rodriguez, 2002; Smith-Morris et al., 2012). Specifically in higher education, this term has often been used as a conceptual framework to situate the strong relationships that Latino students typically have with their families and the ways that families can often positively influence the educational decisions of Latinas (Hurtado et al., 2010; Martinez, 2013; Molinary, 2007; Torres, 2003). I caution using familismo as a guiding framework as this can further perpetuate the belief that all Latinx students necessarily have positive relationships with family members. As I demonstrate with my findings, Latinx student and family relationships can still be fraught with tensions, contradictions, and challenges. As Acosta (2010) explained, the process of familismo is not inherent to the Latino community and is often shaped by one's context (i.e., class, generation, and immigration).



Furthermore, though students certainly supported their family members, none of their narratives reflected placing these needs over their own. Rather it was more so about balancing their needs and the needs of their family. Though half of the students were very close to their parents, the other half reported complicated and tense relationships with them. At the same time, students reported difficult relationships with siblings (younger and older) and grandparents. Furthermore, students expressed the challenges they faced as a result of their parents' limited abilities to provide academic support and limited knowledge of resources to better navigate school. While the majority of parents passed along positive educational messages, the reality is many of them did not actively check students' grades or necessarily expect them to do well in school. This may have been tied to the fact that many students had historically obtained good grades. While Yosso (2006) argued that linguistic capital allows individuals to acquire skills when communicating in more than one language, this does not capture the difficult moments that come with engaging in the process of translation. My findings further nuance this understanding by revealing student narratives that reflected challenges related to the difficulty of not knowing how to provide the Spanish equivalent of legal and medical terminology, missing school because parents needed them to translate, and students having to bear the brunt of parents' frustrations and onslaught of questions throughout the process.

**College search and decision-making process.** For students who attended community college and during the process of transferring from community college, proximity to home and/or work was an important factor they considered to inform what schools they applied to and, for the most part, where they decided to attend. Additionally, their decision on where to attend was individually made as parents could not offer any advice on where to go. For those who went directly into a four-year university after high school, proximity to home and cost of attendance

were two important factors in influencing where they applied and decided to attend. Latino/a students have been found to report distance from family as an important factor in their decision-making process (Jabbar et al., 2017; Martinez, 2013; McAllister, 2012). While some took the time to explain the ins and outs of applying to college, other students simply kept their parents informed of where they had applied.

Throughout the process parents provided a lot of encouragement and emotional support while understanding that students might need to stay late at school to work on college applications. A couple of parents even attended workshops geared towards understanding more about the college application process and what to expect from college. Parents also described helping to pay additional applications outside of the four free applications students received, though it was clear that they were financially stretched by doing so. Older siblings and cousins were also helpful in reviewing applications and scholarship materials as they had all navigated this process back when they were the first ones to apply to college (Jabbar et al., 2017; Kaczynski, 2011; Sy & Romero, 2008). As such, younger siblings and cousins reaped the benefits of the navigational and social capital they possessed which they then transmitted to students in the form of familial capital (Yosso, 2006). They also provided support in the sense of encouraging them to apply to their dream schools.

As noted by Torres and Hernandez (2007), families may express uneasiness at the thought of their children leaving home to go off to college; however, this same uneasiness has been used to support cultural claims from high school counselors that Latino families do not let their children leave home for college (Martinez, 2013). My findings refute such claims as all of the family members in the study, particularly the five parents I interviewed, made it clear that they would have supported students no matter where they chose to go to school. In fact, some

parents were even hesitant to give students their opinions because they did not want students to later regret their decision and blame them for any negative experience they might have.

Furthermore, the parents who did express a desire for students to remain close did so as a result of their low socioeconomic status and undocumented status. For example, they knew that they did not have the financial resources to fly out or drive a long distance to visit students if they attended a school in Northern California or out of state. The impossibility of flying was also due to concerns about being undocumented and, as such, parents asked students to choose a school close to home if the opportunity presented itself. Realities such as this certainly complicate and nuance beliefs that Latino parents simply want their children to remain at home. Furthermore, this finding adds on to previous work that found Latino parents' desire for students to remain at home was due to a concern for their safety (Hernández, 2015) and status as an unmarried woman (González et al., 2004; Harklau, 2013).

One common thread throughout students' narratives was feeling disconnected from their family during the college acceptance process. Most parents were unaware of the ins and outs of this process and figured that as long as students had good grades they could go to any school. In fact, the possibility that a school might not accept their children had not even crossed their mind. This finding adds to previous work that has documented the misunderstandings and incomplete knowledge that K-5 Mexican American parents had about the steps required to attend college (Kiyama, 2010). Furthermore, Alvarez (2015) found that the parents of high school students in her study possessed knowledge gaps about higher education and were unaware of prerequisites for college, the difficulty in going to college, and did not understand the differences between community colleges and four-year universities. Because my study involved the parents of college students, my findings extend Alvarez's (2015) work to demonstrate how parents' knowledge

about the higher education system expanded once their children attended college. While support was definitely expressed, the reality of the college application process was still marked with tensions and misunderstandings experienced by students on the part of parents, siblings, cousins, and tíos/tías (Diaz de Sabatés, 2007). Complicated relationships with parents resulted in students' initial desires to move away for college and apply to schools located in Northern California and/or out of state. Tensions with extended family members also resulted in not understanding why students would attend a school away from home when there were plenty of good and more affordable schools' back home. For one student in particular, this experience was in direct contradiction to the support her older, male cousins received when they moved away from home for work. As Espino (2016) argued, familial consejos can be sites of complex intersections that “reflect social, cultural, and institutional structures that confine them to prescribed gendered and raced roles” (p. 184).

**College support and involvement.** One of the biggest ways parents and grandparents supported students while they were in community college was allowing them to live at home rent free or at a much-reduced cost. Students talked about the perks of having home cooked meals and having day to day support from their parents (Jabbar et al., 2017). As one student was a student parent, she counted on the support of her grandparents to watch over her daughter while she went to school and worked on homework. Outside of that, parents, partners, and grandparents provided encouragement and emotional support (Castro & Cortez, 2017; Jabbar et al., 2017). On the flip side, students provided emotional and, at times, financial support to their family. Some students took the time to involve their families in their community college experience by inviting their parents and siblings to attend various events on their campus.

Still, students in community college described a number of challenges they faced with various family members. One of these challenges involved mothers and grandmothers expecting students to contribute to household chores, which made students feel as though their roles as students and child/grandchild were clashing. Students also described strained relationships with parents and grandparents while also dealing with the stresses that came with being a college student. Such issues included a pregnancy, a parent's separation, moving in with a partner and mother, and misunderstandings about mental health.

Students' experience in the four-year setting found themselves developing closer bonds with their mothers, fathers, and siblings. Parents became more vulnerable with students and opened up about the struggles they had faced throughout their lifetime. Students found themselves growing in their maturity as well. Time away from home prompted students to reflect on their parents' sacrifices and the many difficulties they faced as immigrants living in the U.S. Students reported having regular communication with parents and most talked with them at minimum once a week and at maximum several times a day. Some students also described the importance of maintaining regular communication with their grandparents. Part of the reason for students' frequent communication with their families was that they were not able to visit home as often, so this was their way of compensating for that. As most students described being closer to their mothers than their fathers, this meant that they communicated more frequently with their mothers. Topics of conversation included parents' updating students about the things that were going on at home while students discussed their academic and social life to varying degrees. While Rodriguez (2013) found that Latina/o college students tended to fall into three groups: students who leaned on their family as a support system; students who separated themselves from family when coping through obstacles; and students who created their own families on their

college campuses, the majority of students in this study fell into the first group as they were very vocal in communicating the ups and downs of college. Additionally, Espinoza (2016) characterized the Latinas in her study as either integrators or separators. As my findings suggest, students in this study fell into the integrator category since they included their family as part of their support system in college and regularly communicated their school responsibilities. For the majority of students, the act of being back home helped to alleviate the stress they faced in college. Many of them planned their visits back home in advance and based visits on their class schedule, workload, and midterms/finals.

Latina college students have been documented as looking to siblings, parents, and extended family members for support and encouragement (Carey, 2016; Cavazos et al., 2010; Martinez, 2013; Melendez & Melendez, 2010; Sapp et al., 2016; Sax & Wartman, 2010; Zambrana & Hurtado, 2015). My findings contribute to this literature base by highlighting the ways that parents in the study were instrumental in providing support through their physical presence, emotional support, encouragement/moral support (Auerbach, 2006; Kolkhorst et al., 2010), transportation, consejos [advice] in times of stress, financial support (Kolkhorst et al., 2010), spiritual/religious support, showing up to events on campus, and participating in graduation ceremonies. Such examples as providing transportation and childcare and allowing students to live at home while commuting has been characterized as in-kind financial support by (Jabbar et al., 2017). Still, scholars have suggested the need for studies to highlight the *type* of support that students need from families (Fiebig, Braid, Ross, Tom, Prinzo, 2010). For the students in my study, the types of support they needed from their families were love, care, and blessings. Furthermore, they believed they could tap into their social networks to address any gaps in academic support that families could not fill. Importantly, the overwhelming consensus

from students was that they would not have been able to accomplish their educational goals without the support from their family. In fact, the three students who had graduated during the duration of data collection attributed their graduation and retention at WCU to their families. This finding confirms previous work that found that Latino/a students described family as a salient factor in contributing to their graduation from a four-year university (Kouyoumdjian et al., 2017). Grandparents and siblings were also supportive in providing childcare and emotional and financial support. Older siblings and cousins who had graduated from college commonly provided academic support to students.

Students continued to be instrumental in providing support to their parents throughout their four-year experience. Such support was demonstrated through their good examples/good behavior, helping with paperwork/bills/job applications/job trainings, translating documents and conversations, helping with the renewal process of green cards, and informing them of their legal rights. Students also were proactive when it came to their parents' health, particularly their fathers, and often took it upon themselves to keep up to date with their health insurance, set up doctor's appointments, and remind them to get their blood pressure checked. They also provided older and younger siblings with emotional support and encouragement.

Though relationships with parents certainly became stronger for students during their time at WCU, almost half of students discussed not having much of a relationship and minimal communication with their fathers. Additionally, students discussed several challenges they faced from parents such as wanting them to visit more frequently and asking for help while they were in the middle of schoolwork. It was also challenging for them that their parents did not have the knowledge to guide them through college and were unable to provide academic support. Many of these challenges were exacerbated by such issues as not knowing how to translate thoughts and

emotions into Spanish and being first generation with parents who did not understand the U.S. education system. Still, at no point did students blame their parents for not having this knowledge or language proficiency. Though students did not view the support they provided for parents as a burden as other researchers have suggested (Sy & Romero, 2008), they did express that it could be frustrating to have their parents rely on them so much. This feeling was further exacerbated when parents asked for help with documents that were already in Spanish. Across their time in community college and four-year universities, students discussed the challenges that came when they confronted parents and younger siblings about problematic language they used with regard to race and gender. Delgado Bernal (2006) found that older students often took it upon themselves to set an example for younger siblings by “promoting education or ideas of social justice” (p. 123). As my findings captured and as Delgado Bernal (2006) explained, Latina/x college students often engaged in a process of educating brothers about how to treat and respect women. A Chicana/Latina feminist lens acknowledges students’ agency in critiquing the larger structure of patriarchy present within their families (González et al., 2004). Though Yosso (2006) operationalized resistant capital as being leveraged to combat against white supremacy, I argue that every time students stand up to their parents or siblings they are engaging in a form of resistant capital. In fact, Latinas have demonstrated their ability to move in new ways that resist dominant power structures such as white supremacy and patriarchy that may be embedded within families (Espino, 2016). Students discussed feeling a disconnection with their cousins and tíos/tías [uncles/aunts] as some members claimed they thought they were better than them for attending a four-year university, especially since they attended WCU. Students often discussed being exposed to new ways of knowing in their classes which made them reflect on things in a much more critical way than their cousins.



## **Implications**

### **Implications for Research**

Though the Latino population is increasing we still see that rates of enrollment into four-year universities and degree completion are lower than rates for other racial and ethnic groups. As Zambrana and Hurtado (2015) argued, we must stop using cultural determinants to explain reasons for students' success or failure, rather our research must "investigate multiple social, familial, and institutional factors that jointly, across the life course, contribute to academic success, higher education completion, and career success" (p. 16). This study answers this call by investigating the role of family in impacting the educational trajectories of Latina/x students. Moreover, my study is one of few studies in higher education to include both family members and students in the data collection process.

Often missing in research about Latino families is a larger historical, social, and political context that is necessary to understand the context for present day messages transmitted from parents to children. Without this context and by not layering narratives with additional layers of analysis, researchers risk perpetuating deficit perspectives about the Latino community. Throughout my findings, I do my best to remain cognizant of this fact and elevate participant narratives by contextualizing the ways that life experiences are shaped by issues related to socioeconomic status, country of origin, language, gender, and citizenship status. I also offer possible explanations for findings that at first glance may appear to be deficit in nature.

As I illuminated in my findings, Latina/x students shared familial stories of support mixed with tense and complex relationships that extended across parents, siblings, cousins, and grandparents. As such, I challenge those who engage in work on Latino families to move beyond using concepts like familismo as guiding frameworks in their study as this implies that students

are necessarily family-oriented and have strong, positive relationships with family members. We know that this is not an inherent cultural trait and that relationships are always fluid and dynamic.

As research has clearly documented, older siblings play an important role in passing along important information to younger siblings and generations as they navigate the education system. While my findings supported this, they also illuminated a number of challenges that students faced. The first challenge was that though several students had older siblings that had navigated through college, the age gap between them meant that the system they used to apply to college was not the same one that students had to navigate. In this instance, having an older sibling who had gone to college did not necessarily mean that students had an upper hand in knowing how to navigate the college application process.

### **Implications for Theory**

The three frameworks of LatCrit in Education, community cultural wealth, and Chicana/Latina feminism allowed me to analyze findings through an asset-based perspective that highlighted the strengths found in the Latino community as well as helped me to make sense of issues such as language, immigration, gender, and SES as factors that operate in unique ways for Latinos. While a community cultural wealth lens was helpful to analyze participants' narratives to illuminate counterstories, I found that it fell short of providing a critical and complete picture of the many tensions, challenges, and contradictions that often take place within families. While I can understand that some may be hesitant to point out these tensions in light of all of the deficit narratives that historically and contemporarily have existed about Latino families, I argue that it is possible to highlight the strengths and challenges within families without perpetuating further stereotypes about the Latino community. As a researcher, I have both a responsibility to

approach my research from a place of integrity in presenting the lived experiences of participants and layer these experiences with further analysis and contextualization of larger forces at play. Below, I detail the ways that I push Yosso's (2006) current model to further account for these tensions.

**Community cultural wealth.** Yosso's (2006) community cultural wealth model provided a framework to engage in the use of counterstorytelling to talk about the various forms of capital that Latino families possess. Furthermore, my findings reflected all six forms of capital throughout the educational journeys of Latina/x students as they navigated through K-12, community college, and a four-year university.

**Aspirational capital.** First, though Yosso (2006) primarily conceptualized aspirational capital to describe the ways parents dreamt of future possibilities for themselves and for their children, I expand this unit level of analysis to include the aspirations that students had for their younger siblings. Just as parents wanted more for their children, older siblings wanted the same for their younger siblings. First generation students who were the oldest in their family expressed acquiring important navigational and social capital that helped them be successful, yet for some, this came too late into their experience. They described this experience as "you don't know what you don't know." Older siblings expressed the belief that by transmitting this knowledge to their siblings earlier on in their trajectories, their siblings would be able to accomplish even more things because they would not have to engage in a similar process of finding things out for themselves.

**Linguistic capital.** Second, while Yosso (2006) acknowledges the skills individuals acquire when communicating in more than one language, she does not make room for acknowledging the many difficulties that some may face when engaging in this process. As my

findings suggested, students were often quite annoyed and frustrated at having to help translate for their parents when they were younger. Oftentimes, translating for their parents meant missing classes, not knowing how to translate difficult technical terminology, and being on the receiving side of parents' frustration and endless questions about what another person was saying in English. Furthermore, these students did not frame this process of translation as one in which they gained social tools in communicating with others. Rather, they simply saw it as performing a task that helped their family.

***Familial capital.*** Third, familial capital (Yosso, 2006) describes families as sites of maintaining well-being and close bonds with immediate and extended family that offer care and nurture knowledge. Using familial capital (Yosso, 2006) to analyze my findings, I demonstrated the ways that students maintained close ties with family members. Still, familial capital could not help me account for the nuanced and complex relationships that students experienced within their families.

***Resistant capital.*** Similar to familial capital (Yosso, 2006), I found that resistant capital as it was originally operationalized, did not fully capture the experiences of the students in this study. Yosso (2006) framed resistant capital as engaging in behavior that challenges inequality and oppressive structures such as patriarchy and racism. Throughout her use of resistant capital, Yosso (2006) importantly shares the ways families can pass on knowledge that encourages them to challenge the status quo. What happens when the oppressive structures that students try to resist and challenge are embedded within their own families and communities? As I found in my study, students often challenged such structures such as patriarchy when they talked with their brothers about how to treat women. Yet, Yosso's (2006) definition does not account for this phenomenon. As such, I argue for the expansion of resistant capital to include the oppressive

structures that are also embedded within our own communities. Chicana/Latina feminism forces us to reckon with the contradictions that exist in students' own families and provides a critical lens with which to examine oppression faced inside and outside our communities (González et al., 2004, Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

### **Implications for Practice**

**Students and family members.** While students and family members for the most part reported having good relationships with one another, it became clear to me that participating in this study encouraged greater conversations between them. Participants on both sides discussed the openness with which they talked to one another about what the interview process was like and what they individually discussed with me. Because I interviewed students twice, there were increased opportunities for them to talk about the ways that the study had made them pause to reflect on their educational journeys. A common sentiment expressed among students was how busy they are in college that they do not often stop to think about the people who have always supported them. These interviews became spaces where students were able to reflect on how much they have grown over the years and all of the obstacles that they have been able to overcome. For students, acknowledging their support system in the interviews served as a renewed sense of motivation for why they were in college to begin with and prompted some of them to open up to family members and articulate just how much their support has meant to them. Given these observations, I see the value of encouraging students and family members to engage in open communication with one another.

**K-12.** Thinking about the ways that parents discussed their level of engagement throughout students' K-12 journeys, one important consideration for staff involves reflecting on the attitudes, beliefs, and misconceptions that one has about the Latino community. Within the

K-12 literature, we see the continued perpetuation of stereotypes about Latino parents not valuing education, not wanting their children to leave home for college, and not being actively and directly involved in their children's education. The truth is not as simple as these stereotypes would suggest. Parents' narratives in this study reflected little understanding of the U.S. education system, a difficulty in communicating in English, and working 5-6 days a week to support their family. As such, I urge those working in the K-12 system to take a moment to consider students' backgrounds and what might be making it difficult for parents to fully be involved in their child's K-12 experience. Just as involvement has been narrowly defined in higher education, so too has K-12 parental involvement. As I discussed in my findings, parents and family members in the study engaged and supported their children in the ways that they knew and to the extent to which they could. First-generation students in the study commonly expressed the phrase, "I don't know what I don't know." This same phrase can be used to humanize immigrant Latino parents to show the complexities that come with navigating a country and education system that they did not grow up in and which operates differently from their countries of origin. This last part ties to another suggestion which is to provide workshops for family members that detail the prerequisites and process for applying to college, what factors to consider when deciding on a college, explaining the differences between high school, community college, and university, and detailing what students will be doing when they are in college. All of this information will better equip family members to better understand the complicated process that students face when applying to colleges. This also may alleviate some of the labor that students must extend when having to explain the process to their families, which can be even more challenging when students are also experiencing this process for the first time

themselves. How can we expect students to explain the process of going to college when not all of them understand this process to begin with?

**Role of institutions.** In Chapter 5, I illuminated countless examples of the critical role parents and family members played in fostering college aspirations in students and supporting them all the way through college. For those students in the study who managed to celebrate their graduation before the completion of their interviews, there was a consensus that they would have not have made it as far as they did without their families being by their side through all of the ups and downs of college. Knowing all of this, it becomes important for institutions to ask themselves the following questions: (1) What are we doing to better foster relationships with family members? and (2) To what extent are we encouraging students to maintain relationships with family members? Furthermore, I argue that universities must first look to the communities they are trying to better serve. As such, I center the first-hand perspectives of first-generation Latina/x college students and their families to strategize ways that institutions can better assess their current practices and engage in new ways of bringing Latino families into the fold of college.

**Campus culture.** Students spoke broadly about their perceptions that WCU was not an inclusive place for people of color, in particular Latino students. Furthermore, they described the culture of WCU as “keep to yourself,” “do things on your own,” and “individualistic,” which was in direct opposition to the way they grew up. For students, inherent in these perceptions was the belief that they should not reach out for help and should go at it alone. As such, students felt that WCU did not care about their family or the relationships that they maintained with them. I ask: (1) What role does the University believe family members should have in the lives of college students? and (2) Does this role reflect white, middle class notions about how students

should engage with family? As Kolkhorst et al. (2010) suggested, student affairs professionals would do well to acknowledge students' pre-established support networks (e.g., family) and encourage them to continue to rely on these networks and relationships during college.

***Departmental culture.*** While students did not feel WCU cared about their family, they did express feeling this care from their home department. The difference being that departments (e.g., Education and Chicana Studies) had a better understanding of the backgrounds of students and acknowledged the wealth of knowledge found in Latino families. It is also not lost upon me that these two departments at WCU have high concentrations of students of color and faculty of color compared to other departments on campus. In these departments, students were regularly exposed to concepts such as community cultural wealth and *consejos*, concepts that they had experienced for themselves and now had the language to talk about within an academic setting. Furthermore, there is a true value in subverting “typical classroom practice by recognizing communities outside of the university in relation to students’ lives” (Nuñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, & Vázquez, 2013). Opportunities to do this in practice include having departmental open houses so that students can demonstrate to family what they are learning, doing, and researching; encouraging students to have members of their family sit in on a lecture; opening up dialogue in the classroom that acknowledges family members and the relationships students have with them; and offering assignments that give students the opportunity to interview their families or involve them in assignments.

***Language inclusivity.*** Students believed that WCU did not do a good job of catering to “poor families and families of color,” particularly Spanish speaking families. They expressed a need and desire for increasing access to information in Spanish. Spaces that stood out for them were campus and housing tours and the need for bilingual tour guides that could answer



questions posed by family members. Otherwise, students are forced to take on the labor of translating to families and, as I demonstrated in my findings, this process is often frustrating and difficult for every party involved. The issue of language was also evident in WCU's family programming events which transmitted information solely in English. If many of the Latinx students on campus have families where Spanish is the primarily language spoken, what incentive is there for them to be in a space that is not inclusive of their language needs? The ability for family members to engage with others at these events and take in the information being given at workshops is severely limited. Considerations about language should also be made when thinking about larger commencement ceremonies. Students explained that the larger University ceremony was primarily delivered in English, thereby providing a far less interactive experience for families who did not speak English. All families, regardless of the language they speak, should be able to participate in a culminating experience such as a college graduation and be able to fully experience the ceremony. While the Chicana department at the University offers a departmental graduation ceremony in Spanish and English, this is the only opportunity for Spanish speaking families to be fully immersed in a graduation celebration. What about the rest of the students who have majors that fall outside of that department? As such, universities would do well to consider how to be more language inclusive in their programming.

***Family programming.*** Almost all of the students talked about their perception that family programming events on campus were primarily catered to White families and alumni as these were the folks they saw in attendance at these events. The majority of students knew about a family day/weekend event put on by the University, but most parents remained unaware that this existed nor were they aware that the University had a parents and family association. Why was this the case? Part of the reason for this was because some parents did not have emails, so the

information went directly to students' emails. Even then, the main reason that parents were unaware of these events was that students purposefully did not pass along information because they were concerned that their parents would feel uncomfortable or feel like they did not belong on campus. Specifically, they were concerned that family members would not enjoy any of the events and anticipated challenges related to the high cost of attendance, parents' inability to take off from work, and language barriers. With the cost of about \$100 per person to attend family weekend, concerns about the financial inaccessibility for low-income students to actually participate with their families were commonly voiced. For those who live in-state but farther away, the cost becomes more of a burden when you factor in gas and lodging. For these students, events such as this make it both geographically and financially inaccessible to attend. To increase accessibility for low-income families, students in my study suggested the possibility of the University providing transportation for families who live within two hours of campus. For example, they brought up the difficult commute of driving through the Grapevine and perhaps low-income families not having a car reliable enough to make it up the steep portions of the drive. Other suggestions included taking programmatic events to particular communities if the option of providing transportation to families was not feasible. Upon further investigation, I noticed that WCU did provide programmatic events across the state with many of them taking place in Southern California; yet, no student or family member was aware that these socials existed. Furthermore, when I noticed what regions were targeted, it was very clear that these socials were concentrated in Southern and Northern California leaving all of the Central Valley, the area located in between these two regions, unaccounted for. Although the majority of participants' hometowns were located in Southern California, the Central Valley is home to a large Latino population, many of whom also attend WCU. If the University cares about engaging

the family members of Latinx students, it must do a better job of going into the communities that these students come from. Taking this example of the Central Valley, the University is neglecting a large region of the state that is home to many Latinx students and missing a big opportunity to further engage family members from this region.

When I asked students what they would like to see during a family day/weekend type event, they expressed wanting to see workshops that would be relevant for Latino families such as know your rights information, financial aid (particularly for mixed-status and undocumented students), college life (what does it consist of and how long do students typically take to graduate, traveling abroad, and how to best support students (encouraging conversations between family and students about this and letting parents know how they can still support students regardless of their income). Outside of workshops, students suggested offering childcare during the family weekend to hopefully encourage more families with younger children to attend.

Oftentimes when the University spoke about what type of support parents could provide to students, they gave examples such as care packages and uploading money onto their university cards. What is the problem with this? While these are certainly examples of demonstrating support, they are not the *only* actions families can take to show their support. Yet, these remain some of the most commonly cited examples of support. Though the students in this study recognized that their families supported them in different ways, some of them confessed that only hearing these examples made them feel as though their families were not doing as much as other families were. In this lies the danger of centering White, middle class notions of support that do not account for the diverse ways communities of color show up for students. Truth be told, the lengths the family members in my study were willing to go for students surpassed the more traditional and undynamic ways support has typically been conceptualized in the literature.

*Latinx-specific student organizations.* The only time students in this study felt campus was an inviting space for their family was during events put on by the organizations they were part of such as MEChA and Latinx sororities. Though students did not attend the more general family events, they did feel comfortable enough to attend similar, smaller scale events put on by student-run Latinx organizations. Such events included admitted student's day, transfer day, and familia day that brought families together over food. In fact, a parent in my study mentioned the possibility of having monthly picnics to center being in community with students over food. I think it is not a coincidence that these Latinx organizations are more successful at building relationships with Latino families, given their first-hand knowledge of how to cater to the needs of their own communities. For example, many of their events have included cultural dinners, performances, and offer childcare throughout the family portion. Importantly, they knew that parents had other responsibilities and did their best to accommodate that. Rather than allow the University to point to these events as examples of how they engage Latinx students and their families, it is important to demand that the University take institutional accountability for why these groups do not feel comfortable engaging in the broader University community. As I mentioned, these events are student-run and are much smaller scale than the larger university-wide family programming events. What would it look like if the University fully funded these current events to allow organizations to expand the number of Latinx students and their families they can reach?

At the end of the day, I think it is important for universities to consider which communities they are centering in their events and who they are leaving out. What is the racial/ethnic background of family programming events, the larger parent association, and the parent's council? Furthermore, how can the University make their events more culturally and

linguistically relevant to communities of color, and in the case of this study, the Latino community.

### **Consejos [Advice] from Students, Parents, and Siblings**

During interviews, I posed two questions to students and family members: (1) What advice would you give to a family member whose Latina daughter is about to begin at a university? and (2) What advice would you give to a Latina student who is about to begin at a university? I include the consejos [advice] given by participants and group them thematically below. Furthermore, several of the consejos given by parents and students illuminated both what they expressed/received or what they would have liked to express/receive. I argue that these consejos [advice] are examples that illuminate the familial capital accumulated by students and family members over the course of their lifetimes. My hope is that other students, particularly those who are first generation, and their family members can utilize this knowledge to better navigate the process of college together. As some parents mentioned, they hoped their answers would be able to help other parents and students.

#### **Advice to a Family Member**

##### **Show you love and care about them.**

And I think the last piece of advice would be that just let them know that you're there for them and you care. And...even just sending in a text or call like Hey, I believe in you, or I'm here for support or whatever it may be goes a long way. (Anahi)

...uno de padre debe darles amor a los hijos. Amor a los hijos para guillarlos por el buen camino.... [As a parent, one must give their children love. Give their children love in order to guide them on the right path]. (Señora Garcia, Karen's mother)

I think probably just give your kids or student, the most love you could ever possibly give them because they will need it more than ever just cause it's such a crazy and scary experience, I think. I think for some people it's fine they deal with it perfectly they're used to it, it's no big deal. But for the majority of...students it's not easy, and it's like, the more love you get, the more support you get, the more food you get cooked, the more...I

don't know just even if you can't academically help them just call them, be nice to them, make sure they're okay, and then just also try to learn as well...from them because they're the ones learning so you should be also trying to learn from them. (Rosa)

Oh, I would honestly just say...you don't have to know everything just love them. I feel like that's really all I needed...so I remember one time too when I told my mom like Oh my God, I feel like I'm gonna fail. I'm gonna let you guys down. Or when I decided not to do pre-med, I feel like I'm letting you guys down. And the fact that my mom told me [Cynthia]...even if you drop outta [WCU], we're still gonna love you that's never gonna stop. There's nothing you can do that can erase our love for you. And her telling me... The fact that you're just there is enough...we're proud already. Just the fact that you're existing there, that's already making us proud so don't worry about achieving these phenomenal things. Just the fact that you're there is enough. So...that was a—Ugh I don't have to stress about this anymore. I'm doing enough by just being here so I think my advice then would just be like Yeah you don't have to have all the answers. You don't have to know requirements or how to navigate the college system, but literally I think all we want and need is to be loved, to be affirmed, to be assured that...we're doing it right. Yeah, I really think that's really it just the love, the support. (Cynthia)

Please just be supportive. Sometimes we don't know what we're doing and it's okay if you don't know what's going on, just try to be supportive because—a hug and some words of encouragement can really go a long way. (Lorena)

### **Be there and with them.**

¿Que le diría? Que siempre estén con ella. Que la estén apoyando mas que nada. Que estén siempre al pendiente de ella, que es lo que hace—como te digo siempre estar viéndola. No conformarse uno como hablar por teléfono sino estar apoyándola en persona. Estar en persona con ella. Apoyándola con amor. Apoyándola con consejos. Decirle siempre por este lado, no por este...[What would I tell them? That they always be there with her. That they are supporting her more than anything else. That they are always watching her, what it is that she's doing—like I told you always be watching her. Not settling with talking on the phone, rather be supporting her in person. Being with her in person. Supporting her with love. Supporting her with advice. Always telling her go this way, not this way]. (Señora Rodriguez, Elena's mother)

...my best advice would be to just be there for the student. My parents have been there for me and if there's something they can do in regards to financially and things like that. Don't put the burden only on the kid or on the student. It should be like Okay, my dad has said if you need money, let me know I'm here for you. Try to just kinda make sure... they have the best support in regards to financially cause it's...one of the big ones here in college so I think be there for them as well. (Karen)

and also not be upset if at some point the...student comes back and asks for help cause at the end of the day...your parents are supposed to be there for you...help you when you mess up and you should let your kids mess up because then that's how you learn when

you fall on your face. And trust that your parenting skills up to this point will help your kid survive well enough. (Diana)

### **Support students' wishes.**

...trying not to hold them back. If this is something that your daughter really...wants to do, then support them throughout that journey and don't be an obstacle for them. So, if they wanna dorm don't be like No you're gonna commute or you're not gonna go far away. Be there with them cause then that creates a stronger relationship too as well. (Anahi)

Pues el primer consejo es pues dejar que...los hijos decidan a cuál universidad van a ir y que ellos mismos decidan lo que quieren estudiar. Que uno no les imponga lo que uno quiere que estudien ni a cuál universidad. Que sea la universidad que ellos decidan para que, si en un futuro les va mal, no puedan echarle la culpa a nosotros, a uno de padre, y si les va bien pues que mejor. Que los dejen tomar sus propias decisiones. Que no los hostigue uno con que aquí no, allá no. No. Que los dejen uno ser ellos. Eso es todo. Que les den la libertad y la confianza que ellos necesitan para irse a donde ellos quieran estudiar. Es el consejo que yo puedo dar. [Well the first piece of advice is well let...your children decide which university they will go to and that they themselves decide what they want to study. That one does not impose what one wants them to study nor to which university. That it be the university that they decide that way if in the future it goes badly, they can't put the blame on us, on one as a parent, and if it goes well for them well that's better. That you let them make their own decisions. That you don't harass them with here no, there no. No. That you let them be themselves. That's all. That you give them the freedom and confidence that they need to go wherever they want to study. That is the advice that I can give]. (Señora Montellano, Anahi's mother)

...pues, hablar con ella digamos que es su deseo de ella. [...well, talk to her, let's say what her wishes are]. (Señora Garcia, Karen's mother)

### **Be supportive in high school.**

Just to make sure that they're prioritizing their education cause obviously there's other distractions and yeah just prioritize their education. Push them to get good grades and to study cause I was never pushed to study or stay home and work on homework...my mom was just like Okay. You're going out with your friends? Okay [laughs]. I'll see you later. That's pretty much it [laughs]. (Victoria, Brenda's older sister)

### **Listen and talk to students.**

¿Que consejas daría? Pues viendo la trayectoria de [Reyna] y mi otra hija, pues apoyarlos que con el tiempo y que sean como te diré—que los apoyen, que les estén hablando sobre el futuro, sobre como los padres han llegado aquí y han sufrido para darles una motivación para que ellos tengan eso...de que tienen que sobresalir en este país para vivir mejor. [What advice would I give? Well seeing the trajectory of [Reyna] and my other

daughter, well supporting them with time and that they how would I put it—that they support them, that they are talking to them about the future, about how the parents have arrived here and have suffered to give them a motivation so that they have that...they have to excel in this country to live better]. (Señor Hernandez, Reyna's father)

Just listen. I think that we all kinda have our answers we just don't know how to get to them and once we start talking about them we kind of figure out the blueprint and then you know with some help and guidance then that's when we can start finding our way there but especially as a parent or...in any capacity it's just listening to that person of what they like, what they don't like, what dreams they have, and just asking the questions and letting them figure it out, and then just presenting whatever opportunities that you're able to give them as tools.... it's just letting them speak, hearing them, and then presenting...putting any kind of tools in their path that may be able to help them. (Sara, Cynthia's older sister)

### **College is a lot of work.**

Although you don't understand it, your child's doing a lot of work so make sure that you give them that space and time to perform their best. (Nayeli)

And another thing, never try to belittle maybe academia in terms of the difficultness of it, and having to navigate it, and just understand that if a child is stressed or going through a lot, that it's because it's a lot of factors. It's not just academics, but they might be having to I don't know, go to work and do all of this other stuff. So, don't think that it's just because of academics. (Anahi)

I would say let...the student be. Don't make them feel like they have to keep up with you all the time or visit you all the time. And as a parent, you should just know that your child doesn't have to have constant communication with you for them to still always have you in their hearts. And just parents just have to let go. (Diana)

### **Be proactive in students' college life.**

and try to get involved a little bit as much as they can, visit the campus, or maybe ask even though they don't understand or something like that. Yeah so they can get trained a little bit in knowledge as well....I don't know if they will understand about the classes though cause if I tell my parents about it they will not understand, but I guess just asking and getting to know the school and their friends and what they do I guess a little bit. Mhm. And...if the schools are offering some type of workshops in high school or in community college about higher ed that, if they can, to make the effort to go too so they can maybe get some knowledge from that and understand a little bit better what it is to go through college. (Karen)

And for families especially of first-generation Latina college students, I would say to ask the questions that they have....it could be about anything. About how their daughters are doing or how does school works, even how many classes because that shows that they



care about you, what they're going through and I'm sure that—for me, as a student, I was more than happy to answer those questions for my parents and show them what I'm doing because then...you feel like they wanna get involved and it's not like you're almost begging them to get involved but it's kinda like Oh my parents are having that kinda spark in them to be involved in my life. (Reyna)

For a parent, I would say that knowing—they should be that support. And I think one, having the parents understand that...they're a valuable asset to their educational journey, even if they might not see it, cause I think with Latino parents, we often feel like, Oh, I have nothing to contribute, because I didn't go to college, but No, you do. You have a lot to contribute. You have a lot of cultural wealth, in terms of maybe monetary support in whatever way you can, or even transportation, or whatever it may be. So, knowing that you can be of a support. (Anahi)

### **Don't impose gendered stereotypes.**

So, for the parents...I would want my parents to tell me that the expectations that society has...of me as a woman, as a Latina...I don't have to deal with those things or I...shouldn't be controlled by those things. There's no timeframe. There's no expectation of me rather than just taking care of myself in a way. (Reyna)

Don't be like—my family like, they were like, Oh, she's gonna go and hook up with every guy. She's gonna be a slut. She's gonna do this. She's gonna do that. Why are you even letting her go out of the house by herself? She doesn't even know how to protect herself. No, shut up you know....Teach me how to just be a human being instead of just constraining me because I'm a woman. (Elena)

### **Be friends with them.**

Pues, yo se lo acabo de decir el sábado a...dos personas y ellos son mis compadres....Y yo le dije...ustedes antes que sean sus papás, tienen que ser sus amigos porque una cosa es ser papás y otra cosa es ser amigos. El ser amigos estamos con ellos mas apegados, estamos en mas confianza, y los dejamos que nos hablen de por decir de sus novios, de sus amigos que quieren ser novios, de las materias que no les gusta, de que quieren irse de pinta y no quieren entrar a la escuela....y ya después, cuando tenemos que hablar como padres le dije, ya hablamos seriamente....[Well, I just told someone on Saturday...two people and they are my child's godparents....And I told them...before being their parents, you have to be their friends because it's one thing to be parents and another thing to be friends. By being friends, we're more attached to them, we're in more confidence, and we let them talk to us about their boyfriends, about their friends they want to be boyfriends, about the subjects they don't like, that they want to skip school and not go to school...and then later when we have to talk to them as parents, then we talk to them seriously....]. (Señora Fernandez, Diana's mother)

### **Your job does not finish after high school.**

...siempre digo a los papas apoyar a los hijos hasta el final...no nomas dejarlos oh ya acabé ya...está en la universidad...No. Es cuando...uno debe de estar más y más al pendiente de ellos. [I always tell parents support your children until the very end...not just drop them off and think Oh I finished...they're at the university. No. It's when...one must be on the lookout for them even more]. (Señora Rodriguez, Elena's mother)

### **Advice to a Student**

#### **Échale ganas and don't give up.**

...que siempre tenga una meta y que esa meta—que son cuatro años...que siempre tenga fija su mirada a donde quiere llegar. Que siempre tenga fija sus sentimientos. Que siempre tenga fija a donde va llegar, que es lo que va estudiar, que es lo que va hacer. Que nunca decir no se puede. Siempre decir si se puede. Si se puede porque pues lo pueden lograr. Como Latinos somos persistente. Sino lo hacemos...le podemos hacer de otra manera. Pero siempre alcanzar sus sueños. Nunca rendirse. Siempre ser perseverantes. Siempre lograr lo que quieren. Siempre decir si se puede y como le digo a [Elena] ahora que salió, Si se pudo. Le digo Si se pudo. Le digo Si se pudo. Como madre de hija Latina universitaria, decir como Latinos tenemos mucho potencial, somos potentes. Nomas que nadie no los mira...tenemos que trabajarlo, tenemos que ser persistentes, y no cansarnos. No cansarse. Siempre seguir sus metas, sus sueños...siempre decir esto es lo que quiero hacer y lo voy hacer y lo voy a lograr. Siempre. Seguir tus sueños si. Y primero que nada pues pedirle mucho a Dios que le de también esa guía, que le de esa sabiduría porque acuérdate que sin Dios no somos nada. [...that she always have a goal and that goal—of four years...that she always have her gaze fixed on where she wants to go. That she always have her feelings fixed. That she remain fixed on where she will go, what it is she will study, what it is that she will do. To never say it can't be done. Always say yes you can. Yes, you can because well they can achieve it. As Latinos we are persistent. If we can't do it...we do it another way. But always achieve her dreams. Never give up. Always be persistent. Always achieve what you want. Always say yes you can and how I tell [Elena] now that she left, It could be done. I tell her it could be done. I tell her it could be done. As a mother of a Latina college student, to say that we as Latinos have a lot of potential, we're powerful. It's just that nobody sees that...we have to work hard at it, we have to be persistent, and not get tired. Not get tired. Always follow her goals, her dreams...always say this is what I want to do and I'm going to do it and I'm going to achieve it. Always. Yes, follow your dreams. And first and foremost, to ask God to give her that guidance, that He give her that wisdom because remember that without God we're nothing]. (Señora Rodriguez, Elena's mother)

...yo le diría Mija felicidades. Llegastes a un lugar donde muchos anhelan llegar si. Anhelamos porque yo como madre también...anhelé llegar allí por mis hijos. Y vas a tener subidas, vas a tener bajadas, pero lo mas bonito de todo es que vas aprender cargar todos esos años en tus hombros pero lo bonito es que vas a tener una meta. Y echarle ganas de todo. Así como le dijeron a mi hija van a ver consejeros, van a ver ayuda de toda. Esas universidades tienen ayuda de toda y la principal, la monetaria, verdad? Bueno

que ese ya es el estado verdad, pero te ayudan a como conseguir la ayuda. Y lo... mismo que le dije a mi hija Échale ganas. Aquí estamos para apoyarla y para ayudarla. Y agarrar el toro por los cuernos. [...I would tell her Congratulations miija. You got to a place where many people aspire to get to. We aspire, because me as a mother, I also...longed for my children to get there. And you're going to have ups and downs, but the beauty is you will have a goal. And give it all you've got for everything. Just like how they told my daughter, there will be counselors, there will be all kinds of help. Those universities have all kinds of support and the most important, monetary right? Well that's more of the state right, but they help you figure out how to get the help. And the...same thing that I told my daughter Give it all you've got. We're here to support and help you. And grab the bull by the horns]. (Señora Fernandez, Diana's mother)

### **Include your parents in your college journey.**

“I think especially if you're a first gen...going to college, I think take the time to explain to parents, what it is that you're doing and what the process is like, because I feel like parents will be prouder of you, not that...that's the only thing that you should want from them but I think they will be more proud and they will be more at peace because your parents are always gonna be *worrying* about you and wondering what's going on and worrying and all those things so the more they know, the more of an experience it's gonna be for them as well because I feel like for me, going to college hasn't been about me only, it's been about my family as well. So, I feel like the more you let your parents and family know what's going on, the better of an experience it's gonna be about you. (Rosa)

And knowing that it might be a hard transition within your parents too, but it's like bringing them along in this journey and trying to inform them and bring them along in any way too. (Anahi)

### **“Push your family.”**

Push. Push yourself. Push your family too because you know sometimes they need to get out of the way you know and also start thinking in a different way so it's metaphorically pushing all the obstacles out of the way, people that are telling you no, or laws that are telling you you can't do that. Just push...I guess just the struggle that we've had as females...out in the world but also in the home we're been given that gender role that you're supposed to be the softer, more delicate, take care of everything, nurture everyone person and you take care of yourself whenever you can and so a lot of us that were raised that way or that were oppressed that way, because not all of them were of Mexican culture either, didn't get to do what we wanted to do because of that and we...didn't have the courage to push or to be confident or to be strong enough to go up against these ideas. (Sara, Cynthia's older sister)

### **Pórtate bien.**

Pues si que no hagan que los papas se sientan mal, defraudados...yo podría decirle a una compañera de ella que bueno que te vas ir a estudiar lejos, que bueno que te vas a

estudiar para allá, pero trata de siempre llevar en mente que siempre donde quiera que tu estés no porque tus papas no te están viendo te vas a portar mal. Pórtate lo mejor que puedas, aunque tus papas no te miren verdad...si es una buena muchacha, sigue siendo buena niña y no cambies y no te vayas a dejar que alguien llegue y te vaya a cambiar tus pensamientos. Es el consejo verdad que podría darles. [Well, yes that they don't make their parents feel bad or disappointed...I could tell a classmate of hers, It's so good that you're going to study far away. It's good that you're going to study over there, but always try to keep in mind that no matter where you are just because your parents aren't watching you, doesn't mean you misbehave. Behave as best as you can even though your parents don't see you right...if she is a good girl, keep being a good girl and don't change and don't let anyone come and change your thoughts. That's the advice that I could give them right. (Señora Montellano, Anahi's mother)

### **Set boundaries.**

And then in regards to family, maybe it'd...probably be easier when you're starting college, you know exactly what boundaries you wanna set with your family and really think about it and believe it as well. And stick to it that way you have a consistent relationship with your parents. They expect you to come home maybe once a month, and you'll call 'em every other day at this specific time. So, I think that for me, if I would've had...a more stable schedule for my parents, that could've also helped our relationship. (Diana)

### **Focus on academics and co-curriculars.**

I would say just to focus on academics. I feel like just encourage your relative to be more engaged on campus and to have focus on their leadership by being involved in different clubs...or you can be a creator, create your own stuff. And then focus on your academics because I feel like when you're in college I mean you're 18 to 22 or younger than 25, I feel like those are...that's the time where you need to focus on yourself and build yourself. And anything that you wanna do it can wait. Like if you wanna date, I feel maybe dating can be a big thing for girls right? Anything can wait. Just focus on yourself and everything will come along in the future. There's no rush. My mom told us that there's no rush to rush anything. Everything comes when it needs to come at the right age. (Esmeralda, Rosa's older sister)

## Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

Thank you for expressing your interest in participating in this study. The purpose of this study is to understand the role of family in shaping the educational trajectory of Latina/x college students.

Please answer the questions below. Your responses will remain confidential. If selected for the study, you will be contacted to schedule a convenient date and time for your interviews. Your name and email address will then be unlinked from the rest of your responses and deleted. Please email me (Christina Zavala) at [zavalac@ucla.edu](mailto:zavalac@ucla.edu).

1. Name
2. Email address
3. Age
4. Gender (self-identify)
5. Racial/Ethnic identity (self-identify)
6. Major
7. Where do you live? (e.g., on-campus residential hall, commute from home, off-campus apt)
8. Has a member of your family previously graduated from a four-year university in the U.S.? If so, please identify who from your household graduated and where they graduated from.
9. Tell me a little bit about the makeup of your household (i.e., who lives at home).
10. Which family members have been the most influential in impacting your educational trajectory and/or supporting you while in college? (please list them out by describing their relationship to you (e.g., grandma, uncle, mom, etc.)
11. Would any of your family members be willing to be interviewed by me? Interviews would potentially extend up to 3 times so please ask their willingness to do so before answering this question.

## Appendix B: Student Protocol First Interview

### **Background/Life History**

1. Let's start with you telling me about your major and what you see yourself doing in the near future with a college degree?
2. What types of activities or programs are you involved in and in what ways have they influenced your time here on campus?
3. Can you tell me about where you grew up and a little about your family?
  - a. Probe: Where were they born? Do members of your family work? What do they do/What did they do?
  - b. Probe: Please describe the level of education attained by members of your family?

### **Educational and College Messages**

4. Growing up, to what extent did members of your family encourage education?
  - a. Probe: How did they encourage education?
  - b. Probe: Did these messages vary depending on the family member?
5. Who would you say are the people that you felt supported you the most in getting through high school and eventually graduating and in what ways did they support you?
  - a. Probe: Family
  - b. Probe: High school: teachers, guidance counselors, peers, principal
6. Growing up, to what extent did members of your family encourage this idea of going to college and getting a college degree?
  - a. Probe: How did they encourage/discourage going to college and getting a college degree?
  - b. Probe: How often did you and your family talk about college?
7. Who else outside of your family encouraged you to go to college?
8. Can you tell me about a time that someone discouraged you from going to college?
  - a. Probe: How did you deal with this discouragement?
  - b. Probe: Was this a result of any of your identities? Perhaps being Latina? Being a woman? Any other identities that might be salient for you?
  - c. Probe: Did others you knew face any discouragement?

### **Applying to Colleges and Decision-Making Process**

9. Talk to me about how you learned more about what college was and what it took to get there?
10. Think back to senior year of high school. Can you tell me about what your college process was like as you were applying to college and making decisions about where to attend?
  - a. Probe: Did you have older siblings or other relatives who had been through the process already that could help you?
  - b. Probe: How involved was your family in the process?
  - c. Probe: How many colleges did you apply to? What were they and why did you decide to apply to them?
  - d. Probe: Were you discouraged from applying to certain schools? Why were you discouraged and by whom?
  - e. Probe: To what extent did your family members play a role in where you decided to apply?
  - f. Probe: Who or what influenced your decision to ultimately attend [WCU]?
  - g. Probe: To what extent did your family members play a role in you deciding to attend [WCU]? where you decided to apply?

## **Wrap-Up**

## Appendix C: Student Protocol Second Interview

### **[Bring up any lingering questions from first interview]**

Has there been anything on your mind from our last interview that you wanted to share today?

### **Relationships with Family as a College Student**

1. How would you describe your relationship with your family when you were in high school and now that you are in college?
  - a. Probe: Has it changed? If so, how? How does this make you feel?
2. [If they currently or previously lived at home while in college] What's it like being a college student and living at home?
  - a. Probe: What are some of the benefits and challenges of living at home?
  - b. Probe: Does it seem like a different experience from peers?
3. How often do you talk with members of your family?
  - a. Probe: Method of communication?
  - b. Probe: Who initiates the communication?
  - c. Probe: To what extent do you share details about your academic and social life with your family?
4. How do you navigate being a college student and maintaining a relationship with your family?
  - a. Probe: How do you balance schoolwork, studying for exams, and going home for the weekend/living at home?
  - b. Probe: How often do you go home and why? How has this changed over the course of your time in college?
  - c. Probe: Do you see yourself calling or wanting to go home as often as you thought you would?
5. In what ways do you feel that your family is involved in your college life?
  - a. Probe: Are there areas in which you wish they could be more involved?
6. In what ways do you feel that your family supports you while you are in college?
  - a. Probe: Are there types of support that you wish they were able to give you that you currently don't receive?



- b. Probe: Beyond your family, who else has supported you while in college and how have they supported you?
- 7. To what extent has your family's knowledge, particularly your parents, about college increased as a result of you being in college?
  - a. How might this play out for your younger siblings?
- 8. What messages do you receive from [WCU] about what the role of family should be in your life and the life of other college students?
- 9. How has [WCU] taken initiative to engage your family throughout your time here on campus?
  - a. Probe: In your opinion, what could the University do to better involve them?

### **Wrap-Up**

- 10. What advice would you provide to a future Latina about to enter college?
- 11. What advice would you provide for the parents and family of a future Latina about to enter college?
- 12. Who or what has been the most influential in helping you get to where you're at today [about to graduate/having just graduated]?
- 13. What are your plans moving forward with conversations with your family about going to grad school and getting your masters and perhaps PhD? Are there any concerns that you have?
- 14. Why did you choose for me to interview [insert family member]?
- 15. What has this process of participating in this study been like for you?

## Appendix D: Parent Interview Protocol Spanish

### **Antecedentes/Historia de Vida/Historia Laboral**

1. ¿Dónde creció y con quien?
2. ¿Cuántos años de educación formal recibió? ¿Dónde?
3. ¿Usted trabaja? ¿Dónde trabaja?
  - a. ¿Dónde trabajaba antes?
4. ¿Qué mensajes recibió de su familia sobre la educación?
5. ¿Qué significa la educación para usted?

### **Mensajes Educativos**

6. ¿Qué mensajes le pasaba a [nombre de estudiante] acerca de la educación?
7. ¿Siempre pensaba que [nombre de estudiante] iría a la universidad?

### **Proceso de ir a la Universidad**

8. ¿Con que frecuencia hablaba con [nombre de estudiante] sobre la universidad?
  - a. Que sabe de cómo funciona la escuela secundaria, el colegio comunitario como [ejemplo], y la universidad como [WCU].
9. ¿Cómo participó en el proceso de solicitud de ingreso a la universidad de [nombre de estudiante]
  - a. ¿Le ayudó a [nombre de estudiante] con el proceso de aplicando a la universidad?
  - b. ¿Quién cree que tiene la responsabilidad de ayudar a los estudiantes a completar el proceso de aplicar a la universidad?
10. ¿Cómo terminó decidiendo [nombre de estudiante] a dónde ir a la universidad?

### **Relación con Estudiante**

11. ¿De que manera apoyó a [nombre de estudiante] durante su tiempo en la escuela hasta su graduación de la escuela secundaria?
  - a. con la escuela
  - b. en la casa
12. ¿Cómo describiría su relación con [nombre de estudiante] durante la escuela secundaria?
13. ¿Cómo describiría su relación con [nombre de estudiante] durante estos años que ha estudiado en [WCU]?

14. ¿Con que frecuencia habla con [nombre de estudiante]?
  - a. ¿De que modo? ¿En persona? ¿Sobre el teléfono? ¿Sobre FaceTime/Skype?
  - b. ¿Quién inicia la comunicación?
  - c. ¿Típicamente de que hablan?
  - d. ¿Hay algo de lo que desearía poder hablar mas con [nombre de estudiante]?
15. ¿Cómo cree que [nombre de estudiante] ha estado haciendo en sus estudios y socialmente con amigos y profesores?
16. ¿Cuáles dificultades cree que [nombre de estudiante] ha enfrentado desde que empezó en [WCU]?
17. ¿Con que frecuencia ha visitado a [nombre de estudiante] a [WCU]?
  - a. ¿Cómo fue su experiencia?
18. ¿Cómo cree que apoya a [nombre de estudiante] mientras está en la universidad?
  - a. ¿Hay algún tipo de apoyo que desearía poder ofrecer a [nombre de estudiante] pero no puede?
19. ¿De que manera apoya [nombre de estudiante] a usted, su esposo, y sus otros hijos mientras estudia en [WCU]?
20. ¿De que manera apoya [nombre de estudiante] a usted y el resto de su familia?
21. ¿Qué relación y comunicación cree que la universidad debe tener con los familiares de los estudiantes?

### **Terminar**

22. ¿Qué cree que son los beneficios de estudiar en la universidad?
23. ¿Qué consejo(s) le daría a una estudiante Latina que va a empezar en una universidad?
24. ¿Qué consejo(s) le daría a una familia cuya hija va a empezar en una universidad?
25. ¿Qué le gustaría ver a [nombre de estudiante] alcanzar con su educación y su carrera?

## Appendix E: Sibling Interview Protocol

### **Background/Life History/Labor History**

1. Where did you grow up?
  - a. Probes: Who did you grow up with?
2. How many years of formal schooling did you receive? Where?
3. Do you work? If so, where?
4. What messages did you receive from your family about education?
5. What is college like? What is it all about?

### **Educational Messages**

6. What messages did you pass on to [name of student] about education?
7. Did you always think [name of student] would attend college?

### **Personal College-Going Process**

8. How often did you and your family talk about college?
9. To what extent did your family play a role in your decision to attend college?
10. At the time, did you have any siblings or close relatives that had gone to college?
11. How did you learn about college and who helped you get information about it?
  - a. Probe: Specific examples of what kind of information was obtained
12. How many colleges did you apply to? What were they and where?
13. Who had an influence on where you decided to apply to?
  - a. Probe: To what extent did family members play a role
14. What factors influenced your decision to ultimately attend [name of school]
  - a. Probe: Who had an influence on your decision to attend [name of school]?
  - b. Probe: Family influence

### **Students College-Going Process**

15. How often did you and [name of student] talk about college?
16. What was your role when [name of student] was applying to college?
  - a. Probe: Did you help them with the application process?
17. How did [name of student] end up deciding where to go to college?

### **Relationship with College Student**

18. How would you describe your relationship with [name of student] now that they are in college?
19. How, if at all, has your relationship changed since [name of student] was in high school?
20. How often do you talk with [name of student]?
  - a. Probe: Through what method?
  - b. Probe: Who initiates the communication?
  - c. Probe: What do you talk about?
21. How do you think [name of student] has been doing socially and academically in college?
22. What challenges do you think [name of student] has faced since being in college?
23. How often do you visit [WCU]?
  - a. Probe: Can you give me examples of when you have gone?
24. How do you feel you support [name of student] while they are in college?
25. How does [name of student] support you while they are in college?

### **Wrap-Up**

26. What are the benefits of college?
27. What advice would you provide to a future Latina about to enter college?
28. What advice would you give to a family of a future Latina who is going off to college?
29. What would you like to see [name of student] achieve educationally and career wise?

## References

- Acosta, K. (2010). "How could you do this to me?": How lesbian, bisexual, and queer Latinas negotiate sexual identity with their families. *Black Women, Gender + Families*, 4(1), 63-85.
- Alfaro, D. D., O'Reilly-Díaz, K., & López, G. R. (2014). Operationalizing "consejos" in the p-20 educational pipeline: Interrogating the nuances of Latino parent involvement. *Multicultural Education*, 21(3-4), 11-16.
- Alvarez, C. L. (2015). A model for understanding the Latina/o student and parent college-going negotiation process. In P. A. Perez & M. Ceja (Eds.), *Higher education access and choice for Latino students: Critical findings and theoretical perspectives* (pp. 55-66). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Anzaldúa, G. E. (2002). Now let us shift...the path of conocimiento...inner work, public acts. In G. E. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.), *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation* (pp. 540-576). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Arana, R., Castañeda-Sound, Blanchard, S., & Aguilar, T. E. (2011). Indicators of persistence for Hispanic undergraduate achievement: Toward an ecological model. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 10(3), 237-251.
- Auerbach, S. (2004). Engaging Latino parents in supporting college pathways: Lessons from a college access program. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(2), 125-145.
- Auerbach, S. (2006). If the student is good, let him fly: Moral support for college among Latino immigrant parents. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 5(4), 275-292.
- Baca Zinn, M. (2016). Political familism: Toward sex-role equality in Chicano families. In C. A.

- Noriega, E. Avila, K. M. Davalos, C. Sandoval, & R. Pérez-Torres (Eds.), *The Chicano studies reader: An anthology of Aztlán 1970-2015* (pp. 438-450). Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press.
- Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bebout, L. (2011). *Mythohistorical interventions: The Chicano movement and its legacies*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press.
- Bell, J. S. (2002). Narrative inquiry: More than just retelling stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 207-213.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Carey, R. L. (2016). "Keep that in mind...you're gonna go to college": Family influence on the college going processes of Black and Latino high school boys. *Urban Rev*, 48, 718.
- Carranza, M. E. (2012). Value transmission among Salvadorian mothers and daughters: Marianismo and sexual morality. *Child & Adolescent Social Work*, 30(4), 311-327.
- Castro, E. L., & Cortez, E. (2017). Exploring the lived experiences and intersectionalities of Mexican community college transfer students: Qualitative insights toward expanding a transfer receptive culture. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 41(2), 77-92.
- Cauce, A. M., & Domenech Rodríguez, M. (2002). Latino families: Myths and realities. In J. Contreras, A. Neal-Barnett, & K. Kerns (Eds.), *Latino children and families in the United States: Current research and future directions* (pp. 3-25). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Cavazos, J., Jr., Johnson, M.B., & Sparrow, G. S. (2010). *Overcoming personal and academic*

- challenges: Perspectives from Latina/o college students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 9(4), 304-316.
- Cavazos, J., Jr., Johnson, M. B., Fielding, C., Cavazos, A. G., Castro, V., & Vela, L. (2010). A qualitative study of resilient Latina/o college students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 9(3), 172-188.
- Ceja, M. (2004). Chicana college aspirations and the role of parents: Developing educational resiliency. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(4), 338-362.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Rosiek, J. (2007). Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry: Borderland spaces and tensions. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 35-76).
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 555-582.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Learning and living pedagogies of the home: The mestiza consciousness of Chicana students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in*



- Education*, 14(5), 623-639.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 105-126
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2006). Learning and living pedagogies of the home: The mestiza consciousness of Chicana students. In D. Delgado Bernal, C.A. Elenes, F.E. Godinez, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Chicana/Latina education in everyday life: Feminista perspectives pedagogy and epistemology* (pp. 113-132). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Diaz de Sabatés, G. (2007). Latinas in college: Contra viento y marea (against winds and tides). *Educational Considerations*, 35(1), 20-25.
- Donovan, J. A., & McKelfresh, D. A. (2008). In community with students' parents and families. *NASPA Journal*, 45(3), 384-405.
- Elenes, C. A., Gonzalez, F. E., Delgado Bernal, D., & Villenas, S. (2001). Introduction: Chicana/Mexicana feminist pedagogies: Consejos, respeto, y educacion in everyday life. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(5), 595-602.
- Espino, M. M. (2016). "Get an education in case he leaves you": Consejos for Mexican American women PhDs. *Harvard Educational Review*, 86(2), 183-205.
- Espinoza, R. (2010). The good daughter dilemma: Latinas managing family and school demands. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 9(4), 317-330.
- Fiebig, J. N., Braid, B. L., Ross, P. A., Tom, M. A., & Prinzo, C. (2010). Hispanic community college students: Acculturation, family support, perceived educational barriers, and vocational planning. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 34(10), 848-

864.

Flores, L. A. (2000). Reclaiming the “other”: Toward a Chicana feminist critical perspective.

*International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24, 687-705.

Fulgini, A. J., Rivera, G. J., & Leininger, A. (2007). Family identity and the educational

persistence of students with Latin American and Asian backgrounds. In A. J. Fulgini

(Ed.), *Contesting stereotypes and creating identities: Social categories, social identities,*

*and educational participation* (pp. 239-264). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Gándara, P. (1982). Passing through the eye of the needle: High-achieving Chicanas. *Hispanic*

*Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 4(2), 167-179.

Gaspar de Alba, A. (2014). “There’s no place like Aztlán: Homeland myths and embodied

aesthetics. In [Un]framing the “bad woman”: Sor Juana, Malinche, Coyolxauhqui and

other rebels with a cause (pp. 81-128). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Gerson, K., & Horowitz, R. (2002). Observation and interviewing: Options and choices in

qualitative research. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative research in action* (pp. 199-224).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gildersleeve, R. E., Cruz, C., Madriz, D. & Melendez-Flores, C. (2015). Neoliberal futures and

postsecondary opportunity: Janet Napolitano and the politics of Latina/o college choice.

In P. A. Perez & M. Ceja (Eds.), *Higher education access and choice for Latino students:*

*Critical findings and theoretical perspectives* (pp. 69-83). New York, NY: Routledge.

Gloria, A. M., & Castellanos, J. (2012). Desafíos y bendiciones: A multiperspective examination

of the educational experiences and coping responses of first-generation college Latina

students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 11(1), 82-99.

Gonzales, L. D. (2012). Stories of success: Latinas redefining cultural capital. *Journal of Latinos*

- and Education, 11(2), 124-138.*
- González, K. P., Jovel, J. E., & Stoner, C. (2004). Latinas: The new Latino majority in college. *New Directions for Student Services, (105), 17-27.*
- Harklau, L. (2013). Why Izzie didn't go to college: Choosing work over college as Latina feminism. *Teachers College Record, 115(1), 1-32.*
- Harper, C., Sax, L. J., & Wolf, D. (2012). Parents' influence on college students' personal, academic, and social development. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 49(2), 137-156.*
- Hernández, E. (2015). Balancing dreams and realities: The college choice process for high-achieving Latinas. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 14(3), 202-219.*
- Hill, N. E., & Torres, K. (2010). Negotiating the American dream: The paradox of aspirations and achievement among Latino students and engagement between their families and schools. *Journal of Social Issues, 66(1), 95-112.*
- Howard, T. C., & Navarro, O. (2016). Critical race theory 20 years later: Where do we go from here? *Urban Education, 51(3), 253-273.*
- Hurtado, A., Cervantez, K., & Eccleston, M. (2010). Infinite possibilities, many remaining obstacles: Language, culture, and identity in Latino/a educational achievement. In E. J. Murillo Jr., & E. E. Garica (Eds.) *The handbook of Latinos and education: Theory, research, and practice (284-299)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ibarra, R. A. (2004). Academic success and the Latino family. In R. E. Ybarra & N. López (Eds.), *Creating alternative discourses in the education of Latinos and Latinas: A reader (pp. 113-132)*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Jabbar, H., Serrata, C., Epstein, E., & Sánchez, J. (2017). "Échale ganas": Family support of

- Latino/a community college students' transfer to four-year universities. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1-19.
- Jean-Van Hell, R. (2007). Latino college students' adjustment: The influence of familism, acculturation, and social supports. In M. Montero-Sieburth & E. Meléndez (Eds.), *Latinos in a changing society* (pp. 135-160). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Kaczynski, K. M. (2011). *Exploring the influence of siblings and their relationships on the college choice process* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (3449126)
- Kirk, C. M., Lewis-Moss, R. K., Nilsen, C., & Colvin, D. Q. (2011). The role of parent expectations on adolescent educational aspirations. *Educational Studies*, 37(1), 89-99.
- Kiyama, J. M. (2010). Family lessons and funds of knowledge: College going paths in Mexican American families. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 10(1), 23-42.
- Kiyama, J. M. & Harper, C. (2015). *Parent and Family Engagement in Higher Education*. ASHE Higher Education Report Series. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kolkhorst, B. B., Yazedjian, A., & Toews, M. L. (2010). Students' perceptions of parental support during the college years. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 29(1), 47-63.
- Kouyoumdjian, C., Guzmán, B. L., Garcia, N. M., & Talavera-Bustillos, V. (2017). A community cultural wealth examination of sources of support and challenges among Latino first-and second-generation college students at a Hispanic serving institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 16(1), 61-76.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). It's your world, I'm just trying to explain it: Understanding our epistemological and methodological challenges. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(1), 5-12.
- Langenkamp, A. G. (2019). Latino/a immigrant parents' educational aspirations for their

- children. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 22(2), 231-249.
- Latina Feminist Group. (2001). *Telling to live: Latina feminist testimonios*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lawler, S. (2002). Narrative in social research. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative research in action* (pp. 242-258). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ledesma, M. C. & Calderón, D. (2015). Critical race theory in education: A review of past literature and a look to the future. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 206-222.
- LeFevre, A. L., & Shaw, T. V. (2012). Latino parent involvement and school success: Longitudinal effects of formal and informal support. *Education and Urban Society*, 44(6), 707-723.
- Leyva, V. L. (2011). First-generation Latina graduate students: Balancing professional identity development with traditional roles. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*, 2011(127), 21-31.
- Liang, C. T. H., Knauer-Turner, E. A., Molenaar, C. M., & Price, E. (2017). A qualitative examination of the gendered and racialized lives of Latina college students. *Gender Issues*, 34(2), 149-170.
- López Turley, R. N. (2006). When parents want children to stay home for college. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(7), 823-846.
- Los Angeles Research Institute. (2017, August). *College going in LAUSD: An analysis of college enrollment, persistence, and completion patterns*. Retrieved from: <http://laeri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/laericollegegoing082017.pdf>
- Malagon, M. C., Pérez Huber, L., Velez, V. N. (2009). Our experiences, our methods: Using grounded theory to inform a critical race theory methodology. *Seattle Journal for Social*

- Justice*, 8(1), 1-20.
- Martinez, M. A. (2012). Wealth, stereotypes, and issues of prestige: The college choice experience of Mexican American students within their community context. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 11(1), 67-81.
- Martinez, M. A. (2013). (Re)considering the role familismo plays in Latina/o high school students' college choices. *The High School Journal*, 97(1), 21-40.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- McAllister, D. (2012). *Mexican American first-generation students' perceptions of siblings and additional factors influencing their college choice decisions* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (3517722)
- Melendez, M. C., & Melendez, N. B. (2010). The influence of parental attachment on the college adjustment of White, Black, and Latina/Hispanic women: A cross-cultural investigation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(4), 419-435.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Moje, E. B., & Martinez, M. (2007). The role of peers, families, and ethnic-identity enactments in educational persistence and achievement of Latino and Latina youths. In A. J. Fulgini (Ed.), *Contesting stereotypes and creating identities: Social categories, social identities, and educational participation* (pp. 209-238). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Molinary, R. (2007). *Hijas Americanas: Beauty, body image, and growing up Latina*. Emeryville, CA: Seal Press.
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2017). *Status and trends in the education of*

- racial and ethnic groups 2017*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Núñez, A. M., Hoover, R. E., Pickett, K., Stuart-Carruthers, A. C., Vázquez, M. (2013). *Latinos in higher education and Hispanic-serving institutions: Creating conditions for success*. ASHE Higher Education Report Series. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ornelas, A., & Solorzano, D. G. (2004). Transfer conditions of Latina/o community college students: A single institution case study. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28, 233-248.
- Palbusa, J. A., & Gauvain, M. (2017). Parent-student communication about college and freshman grades in first-generation and non-first-generation students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(1), 107-111.
- Peralta, C., Caspary, M., & Boothe, D. (2013). Success factors impacting Latina/o persistence in higher education leading to STEM opportunities. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 8(4), 905-918.
- Perez, P. A., Rodriguez, J. L., & Guadarrama, J. (2015). Rising voices: College opportunity and choice among Latina/o undocumented students. In P. A. Perez & M. Ceja (Eds.), *Higher education access and choice for Latino students: Critical findings and theoretical perspectives* (pp. 84-93). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pérez Huber, L. (2009a). Challenging racist nativist framing: Acknowledging the community cultural wealth of undocumented Chicana college students to reframe the immigration debate. *Harvard Education Review*, 79(4), 704-729.
- Pérez Huber, L. (2009b). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: Testimonio as methodology in

- Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(6), 639-654.
- Pérez Huber, L., Malagón, M. C., Ramirez, B. R., Camargo Gonzalez, L., Jimenez, A., & Vélez, V. N. (2015, November). *Still falling through the cracks: Revisiting the Latina/o education pipeline*. Retrieved from: <http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/files/RR19.pdf>
- Perna, L. W., & Kurban, E. R. (2013). Improving college access and choice. In L. W. Perna & A. Jones (Eds.), *State of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups* (pp. 10-33). Florence, KY: Routledge.
- Pew Research Center. (2014). *Demographic profile of Hispanics in California, 2014*. Washington, DC: Author
- Pew Research Center. (2016). *5 facts about Latinos and education*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Pew Research Center. (2017). *Facts on U.S. Latinos, 2015: Statistical portrait of Hispanics in the United States*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Pryor, J. H., Hurtado, S., Sharkness, J., & Korn, W. S. (2007). *The American freshman: National norms for fall 2007*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.
- Quiñones, S., & Kiyama, J. M. (2014). Contra la corriente (against the current): The role of Latino fathers in family-school engagement. *School Community Journal*, 24(1), 149-176.
- Reyes, R., III, Valles, E., & Salinas, C. (2011). The evolution of Luz: A case study of gendered tensions of romance and domesticity in the life of a former migrant Chicana college student. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 10(2), 147-160.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). Narrative analysis. *Qualitative Research Methods* (Vol. 30). Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



- Rios-Aguilar, C., & Deil-Amen, R. (2012). Beyond getting in and fitting in: An examination of social networks and professionally relevant social capital among Latina/o university students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 11*(2), 179-196.
- Rodriguez, S. L. (2013, April). *Overcoming college obstacles with la familia*. San Francisco, CA: American Educational Research Association.
- Rodríguez, L. F., & Oseguera, L. (2015). Our deliberate success: Recognizing what works for Latina/o students across the educational pipeline. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 14*(2), 128-150.
- Saenz, V. B., & Ponjuan, L. (2009). The vanishing Latino male in higher education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 8*(1), 54-89.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sandoval, C. (2016). Introduction. In C. A. Noriega, E. Avila, K. M. Davalos, C. Sandoval, & R. Pérez-Torres (Eds.), *The Chicano studies reader: An anthology of Aztlán 1970-2015* (pp. 319-335). Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press.
- Sapp, V. T., Kiyama, J. M., & Dache-Garbino, A. (2016). Against all odds: Latinas activate agency to secure access to college. *NASPA Journal About women in Higher Education, 9*(1), 39-55.
- Sax, L. J., & Wartman, K. L. (2010). Studying the impact of parental involvement on college student development: A review and agenda for research. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, 25*, 219-255.
- Sax, L. J., & Weintraub, D. S. (2014). Exploring the parental role in first-year students' emotional well-being: Considerations by gender. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 51*(2), 113-127.

- Segura, D. A., & Pierce, J. L. (1993). Chicana/o family structure and gender personality: Chodorow, familism, and psychoanalytic sociology revisited. *Signs, 19*(1), 62-91.
- Seidman, I. E. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Shoup, R., Gonyea, R. M., & Kuh, G. D. (2009, June). *Helicopter parents: Examining the impact of highly involved parents on student engagement and educational outcomes*. Atlanta, GA: Association for Institutional Research.
- Smith-Morris, C., Morales-Campos, D., Alvarez, E. A. C., & Turner, M. (2012). An anthropology of familismo: On narratives and description of Mexican/immigrants. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 35*(1), 35-60.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and latercrit theory framework. *Urban Education, 36*(3), 308-342.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and latercrit theory and method: Counterstorytelling. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 14*(4), 471-495.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 23-44.
- Squire, C. (2008). Experience-centered and culturally-oriented approaches to narrative. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research* (pp. 47-71). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sy, S. R., & Romero, J. (2008). Family responsibilities among Latina college students from immigrant families. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 7*(3), 212-227.
- Torres, V. (2003). Mi casa is not exactly like your house: A window into the experience of Latino students. *About Campus, 8*(2), 2-7.

- Torres, V., & Hernandez, E. (2007). The influence of ethnic identity on self-authorship: A longitudinal study of Latino/a college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(5), 558-573.
- Valencia, R. R., & Black, M. S. (2002). "Mexican Americans don't value education!" On the basis of the myth, mythmaking, and debunking. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1(2), 81-103.
- Vasquez, J. M. (2014). Gender across family generations: Change in Mexican American masculinities and femininities. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 21(5), 532-550
- Villalpando, O. (2004). Practical considerations of critical race theory and Latino critical theory for Latino college students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2004(105), 41-50.
- Villenas, S., & Moreno, M. (2001). To valerse por si misma between race, capitalism, and patriarchy: Latina mother-daughter pedagogies in North Carolina. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(5), 671-687.
- Villenas, S., Godinez, F. E., Delgado Bernal, D., & Elenes, C.A. (2006). Chicanas/Latinas building bridges: An introduction. In D. Delgado Bernal, C.A. Elenes, F.E. Godinez, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Chicana/Latina education in everyday life: Feminista perspectives pedagogy and epistemology* (pp. 2-14). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Watford, T., Rivas, M.A., Burciaga, R., & Solorzano, D.G. (2006). Latinas and the doctorate: The "status" of attainment and experiences from the margin. In J. Castellanos, A.M. Gloria, & M. Kamimura (Eds.), *The Latina/o Pathway to the PhD: Abriendo Caminos* (pp. 113-133). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

- Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. New York: NY, Routledge.
- Wolf, D., Sax, L. J., Harper, C. E. (2009). Parental engagement and contact in the academic lives of college students. *NASPA Journal*, 46(2), 325-358.
- Yarbro-Bejarano, Y. (2006). Sexuality and Chicana/o studies: Toward a theoretical paradigm for the twenty-first century. In A. Chabram-Dernersesian (Ed.), *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Reader* (pp. 224-232). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Yosso, T. (2006) *Critical race counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano educational pipeline*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Yosso & Solórzano (2005). Conceptualizing a critical race theory in sociology. In M. Romero, & E. Margolis (Eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Inequalities* (pp. 117-146). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Zambrana, R. E., & Hurtado, S. (2015). *The magic key: The educational journey of Mexican Americans from k-12 to college and beyond*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press.
- Zitlali Morales, P., & Monzó, L. D. (2014). Ethical dilemmas of emerging Latina researchers: Studying schools serving Latin@ communities. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(79), 1-14.