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Sueños, Corazón y Posibilidades:

Negotiations and the Realm of Possibility for Latina/o Student and Parent College-Going

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

by

Cynthia Lua Alvarez

2016

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sueños, Corazón y Posibilidades:

Negotiations and the Realm of Possibility for Latina/o Student and Parent College-Going

by

Cynthia Lua Alvarez

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Patricia M. McDonough, Chair

This study explores the family unit as a crucial aspect of Latina/o college-going – an aspect far more important than previously asserted through research – as well as the emotions, expectations, negotiations made as the realm of possibility changes. Through the narratives told of each family, we see the negotiation of various events, and weaved through all are the complex emotions and perceptions caused by the context and process themselves. This study adds to the growing number of studies focusing on Latina/o college-going that use familial capital and other forms of knowing by discussing this process as one in which the family expectations and perceptions are incorporated. Given the need for a re-conceptualization of Latina/o college-going and the methodological gap in research design, this phenomenological study contributes to the field by asking direct questions regarding the experience of the family unit through the

college-going process. As scholars, thinkers, and individuals charged with the responsibility to develop a full understanding of phenomenon, we owe it to our communities to thoroughly investigate the CGP and create pathways through which to increase college-going.

The dissertation of Cynthia Lua Alvarez is approved.

Daniel G. Solorzano

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Patricia M. McDonough, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

## **Dedication Page**

To all those yearning and searching for a more just world, for a world where a dream does not die as a dream - this is for you.

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## **Acknowledgments**

I am a first-generation college student. My parents, Maria de Jesus and Jorge Alvarez, were born in Mexico and came to California in search of opportunity at a better life, and for decades worked back-breaking jobs in order to support my twin brother and younger sister through college. My parents instilled in me the value of education, and with a lot of luck in being placed in the right courses and meeting the right mentors, I achieved high levels in school. I graduated Valedictorian from my high school, attended UCLA and graduated Cum Laude while double-majoring in Women's Studies and Chicano Studies, and entered a Ph.D program in Higher Education the following year. I was so accustomed to enjoying success as a result of hard work and the support of others.

However, soon after finishing my coursework, I experienced a series of personal events that slowed down my progress. A very serious relationship ended, my two grandfathers passed away six months apart from each other, and I fell into a depression. In addition, my satisfaction with the Ph.D program waned and my confidence in my academic work fell. All those factors combined to extend my Ph.D completion time to almost nine years. I struggled with feelings of shame and disappointment for taking so long to complete my doctorate - especially after being so successful years prior.

Towards the end of my journey in the Ph.D program I got a chance to listen to Justice Goodwin Liu at a UCLA School of Law Commencement. Justice Liu spoke about the necessity and beauty of failure in our lives. We so often focus our efforts on achieving successful and perfect lives, but the reality is that perfection is not attainable. "Failure" is necessary for growth and is an integral part of living.

After hearing his words and having gone through the trials and tribulations of a Ph.D program, I now feel stronger and ready to take on a fight for social justice. This would not have happened without the support of a long-standing community of supporters. As much as I worked for this Ph.D, it would have been a million times more difficult if it were not for them. This degree is as much theirs as it is mine:

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Johnson-Ahorlu, N. R., **Alvarez, C. L.**, & Hurtado, S. (2013). Undermining the master plan: Divestment in higher education and student experiences. *Journal of College Admission*, 218, 22-35.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction & Context

The Latina/o<sup>1</sup> population in the U.S. is increasing. According to current U.S. Census estimates, there are 55 million people of Hispanic origin, constituting 17 percent of the country's population and making it the largest ethnic or racial minority (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates, 2014). The U.S. Census also projects that this same population will rise to 119 million, or 28.6 percent of the population, by 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Projections, 2014). In California, the state with the largest Hispanic population in the U.S., has 15 million Hispanics residing within their borders (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates, 2014). In regards to education, the data tells a bleak story. According to data gathered from the 2000 U.S. Census, about 53 percent of Latina/o students who start as elementary school students in the U.S. actually graduate from high school, while only 11 percent of those elementary school students graduate from college (Pérez Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sánchez, & Solórzano, 2006). Almost 15 years later, the statistics on education have improved compared to previous decades, but remain dreary. Data gathered by the U.S. Census showed that in 2013, 64.7 percent of Hispanics 25 and older had at least a high school education, while only 14 percent - or 4.2 million - of the Hispanic population 25 and older had earned a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013a; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013b). The statistics sharply decreased when considering the number of Hispanics 25 and older who had advanced degrees by 2013 - a total of 1.3 million (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013b). Given the significant rise in the number of Latina/os in the U.S. and their undeniable influence in the future of the U.S. and therefore the global community, it is

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "Latina/o," "Hispanic," and "Chicana/o" will be used interchangeably due to the inconsistency and lack of agreement on what the proper term is for that population in the United States.

imperative that our focus turn to ensuring that access to quality education, and especially access to a higher education, is not denied to this group as it has in the past.

Educators, scholars, and policymakers must work together to increase the number of Latina/o students accessing higher education and earning degrees, but in order to do that, we must first understand what Latinas/os experience as they journey towards entering higher education. To do that we must also increase our understanding of how Latina/o students and parents experience the college-going process together in order to learn more about their process and begin thinking of ways to increase their entrance into higher education. Given the urgency for research and knowledge on this issue, the purpose of this study is to understand one specific component of the Latina/o college-going process (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987): the dynamics and complexities between Latina/o students and parents during the college-going process.

What is it that we know about how Latina/o parents and their children experience the college choice process? Research that specifically focuses on these two parties varies in amounts – there exists quantitative studies that have included both Latina and Latino students in their analysis, but in regards to qualitative studies, much more research has focused on the Latina college choice process as compared to research on either the Latino college choice process or the role of Latina/o parent in their children's college choice process. In the cases where both Latina and Latino students have been studied together, the findings have not been disaggregated by gender, meaning that it is difficult to determine if there are any differences in how they experience the college choice process. Nonetheless, there does exist valuable empirical data on the Latina/o parent college choice process.

Studies conducted on parents suggest that they play a special role in the college choice process for their student (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper,



1999; Stage & Hossler, 1989), and research specific to Latina/o parents shows that they are a top source of support and encouragement for their children who are contemplating their post-secondary education (Auerbach, 2002, 2004; Ceja, 2001, 2004, 2006; Delgado-Gaitán, 1992; Gándara, 1995; Pérez, 1999; Talavera-Bustillos, 1998). We also know that Latina/o parents tend to have concerns and doubts on what college is and how they and their children will navigate it (Auerbach, 2004; Fann, Jarsky, & McDonough, 2009), most of these concerns have to do with their ability to finance their student's education (Auerbach, 2004; McDonough & Calderone, 2006); and safety – particularly that of their daughters (Alvarez, 2011; Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2001, 2004; Valdés, 1996). In regard to the communication that Latina/o students and parents engage in, we do know that parents are constantly sending implicit and explicit messages (Alvarez, 2011), or what Ceja (2004) calls indirect and direct messages, all of which influence students' thought processes and decisions. Although previous research has allowed us to understand the perspectives of Latina/o parents, the majority of studies frame parents as side players in the Latina college choice process rather than being central to the process and as individuals that also experience the process (Alvarez, 2010). The students, on the other hand, experience many influential factors during their college choice process, including peers, parents, teacher and counselor support, gender, socioeconomic status, accessibility to resources, and academic preparedness (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2001, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Pérez, 1999; Perna, 2006; Talavera-Bustillos, 1998).

During the 2008-2009 academic year I conducted a pilot study collecting qualitative data on Latina high school seniors and their parents from a rural area in southern California regarding their college choice process. As with most pilot studies, fascinating findings came from this project and pushed me to think about a dissertation follow-up. The first intriguing finding was

that there appeared to be miscommunication between the students and the parents about?. Messages (both explicit and implicit) being sent from both parties were commonly misinterpreted, which led them to make choices based on the assumptions and, in some cases, drastically changing the students' post-secondary trajectory. A study done by Ceja (2004) found the same message patterns, but because his data collection only dealt with Chicana students and not their parents, my findings reinforced his initial findings that the exchange in explicit and implicit messages between Latinas and their parents existed, however, it is still left to be known whether the same communication pattern during the college choice process exists between Latina/o parents and their sons. Second, during this pilot study I found that the process is quite a complex one, with both the Latina students and their parents constantly modifying their plans and objectives on what they will do and what will happen over what remains of their college choice process and post-secondary phase. Interestingly, it appears that the choice phase (and to a certain extent the other phases of the college choice process), is an amalgamation of all three stages, where students and their parents continue through the pre-disposition and search phases of the process (Alvarez, 2011). Still left to be known is whether the amalgamation of phases holds true over a longer period of time and with a larger sample.

The pilot study and past research has provided enough insight to the Latina/o college choice process, however, this same body of literature left unanswered questions regarding the conceptualization of Latina/o college choice. Furthermore, the term used to describe this process - college choice - did not properly convey its reality. As the research progressed, the term "college-going process" (Alvarez, 2015) (henceforth identified as "CGP") felt more relevant, and therefore will be used for the entirety of this dissertation as the term to describe the Latina/o experience in accessing higher education.

Existing qualitative research on the college-going process, with the exception of one study (Alvarez, 2015), has not included Latina/o students and parents in the same study, which brings about the question of how we, as researchers, are conceptualizing the Latina/o college choice – and at a larger scale, the college planning – process. Based on previous research, as well as our common day-to-day experience, we understand that students and parents each have their own set of expectations, aspirations, and a perceived “norm” of how their college choice process will go and how it will result. Throughout the student’s senior year of high school (and even prior), each party develops their perception of opportunities and a realm of possibilities for what could be, which they experience in a tangential fashion while also interacting with each other (Alvarez, 2010, 2011), making the process a far more interactive and complex negotiation process. It is also during this process that factors, such as family dynamics, aspirations, and expectations, come into play, further complexifying the college choice process for the family. Ultimately, the more we understand the intricacies of the college-going process for Latina/o students and parents the more equipped we will be to develop new strategies to increase higher education access for the Latina/o population in the U.S.

The question remains: how can we reconceptualize the way we think of college-going? Research has highlighted the roles parents play in the process from the perspective of the students, as it has also provided information on the influencing factors in college-going for Latinas/os. However, it has been done so without a methodological design that simultaneously includes both parties, thus preventing us from understand the process as others have indirectly suggested it be: a familial process. Given the need for a re-conceptualization of Latina/o college-going, and the methodological gap in research design, this study contributes to the field by asking the following research questions:

1. How do Latina/o students and parents, as a unit, experience the college-going process during the student's senior year of high school?
2. How do their respective perspectives, aspirations, expectations, and overall perceptions of their realm of possibilities come into play with each other during their college-going process?

This dissertation will inform theory, our understandings of Latina/o families, and practices used by advocacy groups, outreach programs, institutions, and counselors – any important role player in the college-going process. In addition, this study will contribute to understanding the communication process between Latina/o students and parents during the college-going process.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Studies on Latinas/os accessing higher education show that very few of them advance to any form of higher education and diminish the higher the level in the higher education system. These dismal statistics – even when compared to other racial/ethnic groups (Pérez Huber et al., 2006) – shed light on the work that remains to be done to increase the educational levels of Latinas/os in the U.S. This chapter will provide a review of empirical research studies that have informed what we know and the way we think about the Latina/o college-going process. I will first cover the history and findings on the general field of college choice process, and then proceed to describe the existing literature on Latina/o students, followed by research focused on Latina/o parents. This section will conclude with an analysis of Latina/o student college choice process literature. Providing an overview of these three sectors of the college-going process will provide contextual information to understand the purpose, significance, and findings of this study.

### **A History of College Choice**

The study of the college choice process has been in development for decades, with the groundbreaking research done in the 1960s and 1970s (Christensen, Melder, & Weisbrod, 1975; Kandel & Lesser, 1969; Sewell & Shah, 1967). Research in this field took a major turn in the 1980s, when a new paradigm was introduced. In 1989, Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith conducted a review of research in college choice and identified a set of models used by scholars to identify and better understand the student college choice process<sup>2</sup>. These models fall under one of the four categories: econometric, consumer, sociological, or combined (Hossler, Braxton,

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<sup>2</sup> Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) define student college choice as “a complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university or institution of advanced vocational training” (p. 234).

& Coopersmith, 1989). From the four categories, perhaps the most influential in the college choice research was a model falling in the combined category – that of Hossler and Gallagher (1987).

Like most combined models, which tend to focus on aspirational factors for college attendance and the perceived benefits of college attendance, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) was divided into several phases, in this particular case being predisposition, search, and choice. In the predisposition phase, students develop an interest in attaining a post-secondary education and make the decision to pursue it. A number of variables were found to correlate with the predisposition stage, including the family's socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, gender (which was determined to have little impact), family residence (rural vs. urban), parental levels of education, parental encouragement and support, peer encouragement and support, encouragement from high school counselors and teachers, student academic ability and achievement, student educational aspirations and career plans, quality of the high school and the academic track the student is enrolled in, and the labor market and increased rates of return (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989). The search phase is characterized by the information sources that students use to obtain information about colleges. These information sources can include (but are not limited to) friends, institutional agents (both from high school and post-secondary institutions), campus visits, and campus brochures. The third and last phase Hossler and Gallagher (1987) suggest is choice, which includes the selection of institutions to which the student will apply and the final matriculation decision. Just as in the predisposition phase, there are a variety of factors that impact the post-secondary choices that students make, which include socioeconomic status, academic ability, ethnicity, parental levels of education, family residence

characteristics, parental encouragement, peer encouragement and support, high school quality, institutional attributes, and financial attributes.

While Hossler and Gallagher (1987) created a helpful model in understanding the multi-faceted college choice process, as well as the important role parents play in the process, it is imperative to note that there are other possible alternatives to their conceptualization. This study provides empirical evidence that parents are more intricately involved in the Latina/o college-going process than Hossler and Gallagher (1987) describe. For example, the search phase marks the individual as being the sole receiver of college-related information and does not emphasize that both students and parents receive and engage college-going information they receive from outside sources.

Aside from treating the college choice process as an individual phenomenon, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model presents other weaknesses. Despite the fact that Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) student college choice framework provided an adequate model for understanding students' post-secondary choice process, it does not explicitly consider the differences that historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups experience in the college-going process. In the following sections I will present a review of the literature that expands Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model to include the voices of an underrepresented population – Latina/o students and parents.

### **College Choice for Latina/o Students**

A lot more research has been done to understand the college choice process for Latina students as compared to their male counterparts and their parents. Although Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) student college choice framework suggest that the college choice process for students involves a somewhat linear progression, there are a number of factors, including race,

socioeconomic status, and culture, that make this a far more intricate process for students – and in particular, for Latinas/os.

Research has indicated that there are significant racial and ethnic differences in Latina/o students' predisposition for college (Pérez & McDonough, 2008). In a quantitative study conducted by Hurtado, Inkelas, Brigs, & Rhee (1997), a little over half (53 percent) of Latino high school students reported they were likely to attend a four-year institution – a much lower percentage as compared to African Americans (60 percent), Whites (60 percent), and Asian Americans (75 percent). In other quantitative studies, Latinos were found to be most likely to attend less-selective institutions, most likely to postpone college entry, and less likely to maintain a continuous enrollment than other racial groups (Hearn, 1991; Swail, Cabrera, & Lee, 2004). Further research has found that systemic barriers affect Latina/o college choice; a lack of counselors, teachers with inadequate training, and the dearth of college preparatory curricula block the pathway to college for most California public school students – 47 percent of them being Latina/o (Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Rogers, Terriquez, Vallardes, & Oakes, 2006; State of California, Department of Finance, 2003).

Finances also play a major role in the Latina/o college choice process. Financial concerns not only impede degree attainment (Cerna, Pérez, & Sáenz, 2006), but can also push Latinas/os away from four-year institutions and toward community colleges where it is difficult to successfully transfer onto a four-years institution and graduate (Baker & Velez, 1996). Increasing costs in college tuition also affect Latina/o students, as they are the most sensitive to changes in tuition (Swail, Cabrera, Lee, & Williams, 2005). In addition, McDonough and Calderone (2006) found that there is great variance in counselor, counseling, and information distribution strategies – most counselors only provided basic information on local college costs,



pushed students to community colleges as the only affordable option, partly as a reaction to parent loan aversion. Furthermore, Muñoz and Rincón (2015) revealed that Latino students are over two times more likely to enroll in a two-year college as compared to a four-year if their financial planning includes taking out student loans, and postulated that this could indicate that students in part choose to attend a two-year college as a way to minimize school debt or see it as a low-risk foray into higher education. In regards to the relationship between finances and expectations, Muñoz and Rincón (2015) also found that the likelihood of enrollment at a four-year institution is more likely to occur for Latino students whose parents with a college degree and come from a higher socioeconomic status. However, a recent study by McDonough, Calderone, and Venegas (2014) found that for low-income students, they may follow their educational aspirations despite the fear of accruing college debt. This finding accounts for cases in which low-income students pursue higher education despite statistically being less likely than their more affluent peers to pursue college.

Researchers have also found that gender plays a very important factor in Latina college choice. In a quantitative study conducted by McDonough et al. (2004), gender – in addition to race – was found to be a critical factor in mediating the college choice process for Latinos and Latinas. In one of the only qualitative studies that examines in-depth the role of gender in the Latina college choice process, Ceja (2001) found that Chicanas' college choice process is most influenced by the distance of the institution from home, as well as the fear of leaving home, in both the search and choice phases. Ceja (2001) further cites that key findings, such as that of leaving home, “seemed to be influenced by a gender as well as a cultural dimension” (p. 195) and was also one of the most important issues for their parents. Ceja concludes by recommending that the role of gender continue to be analyzed, as it proved to be an important

factor in the Latina college choice process. Due to the fact that previous research has hinted that Latinas face issues that could be attributed to gender (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2001; McDonough et al., 2004; Valdés, 1996), differences in gender will not fully be understood unless we qualitatively study Latinas, their male counterparts, and their parents to understand the true motivations and reasons behind those thoughts and expectations.

Research has also been conducted on the emotional work that can be present in students' college-going efforts. In a study conducted by Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, and Coronado (2010) discusses the socioemotional experiences of undocumented Latina and Latino students. Their study reveals that undocumented students' socioemotional experiences in their academic trajectory include feelings of rejection, hopelessness, and a sense of shame and discrimination. Furthermore, they highlight a number of coping mechanisms these students engage in, such as relying on the emotional and financial support of families, institutional agents, peers, and campus support programs. Although my dissertation study does not include undocumented students or undocumented parents in its participant sample, Pérez et al.'s (2010) article does bring forth the importance in seeing students' emotional work as a valuable component of their journey into U.S. higher education.

### **College Choice for Latina/o Parents**

Studies show that Latina/o parents have little to no access to very basic information about college, specifically on financial aid, general information about higher education, and the college application process and requirements (Fann et al., 2009). Although their limited knowledge on college-going information limits the ways in which they can partake in their student's college-going process, we know Latina/o parents offer essential encouragement and support (Ceja, 2006). Studies have also found that Latino parents have high aspirations for their children (Ceja

2001, 2004) and are a crucial source of support (Pérez & McDonough, 2008), especially when it comes to the development of educational aspirations for their children (Ceja, 2004). Parents' also teach resiliency to Chicana students and pushes them to make the best of their opportunities (Ceja, 2004). It has been argued that Latina/o parents push for education because it is one component for their children to follow the "good path of life," and in a way, this yearning to have their children continue their education is tied to their own beliefs about the way life should be led (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Delgado-Gaitán, 1992; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Valdés, 1996).

Researchers have also found that Latina/o parents tend to have concerns and doubts on what college is and how they and their children will navigate it (Alvarez, 2015; Auerbach, 2004; Fann et al., 2009), most of these concerns have to do with their ability to finance their children's education (Auerbach, 2004; McDonough & Calderone, 2006); and safety – particularly that of their daughters (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2001, 2004; Valdés, 1996). In regards to Latina students, parents often express concern about their safety and quality of life once in college (Auerbach, 2004). There exists evidence that when thinking about college readiness, parents consider their student's maturity (Alvarez, 2015; Auerbach, 2004), as well as separation from the family, and academic capabilities (Alvarez, 2015). Related to separation from family, research has found that Latina/o students have reported feeling encouraged by their parents to stay close to home while they contemplate their post-secondary decisions (Alvarez, 2015; Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Pérez & McDonough, 2008).

In addition, one of the most important factors in Latina college choice has been found to be family, including extended family members (Ceja, 2001, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Pérez, 1999, Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Studies have found that Latino parents have high aspirations for

their children (Ceja 2001, 2004) and are a crucial source of support (Pérez & McDonough, 2008; Sánchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006), especially when it comes to the development of educational aspirations for their children (Ceja, 2004). More specifically, Latino parents have been found to be influential in the development of college goals, and were seen by Latinas as the most important source of influence during the predisposition phase (Ceja, 2001) and were the people Latina students spoke to about their college planning process (Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Another part of the family unit that has been found to be influential in the Latina college choice process are siblings, who – when their parents are not able to fulfill the role of information sources – take on that role (Ceja, 2001; Pérez & McDonough, 2008; Talavera-Bustillos, 1998). Extended family members, such as aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and godparents, have also been found to step in and provide invaluable information to Latina students – either because they had been through the college choice process themselves or had gone through it with other family members (Pérez & McDonough, 2008).

In regard to the communication between Latina/o parents and their college-going children, a couple of studies have found that parents and students engage in indirect and direct messages (Ceja, 2004), or explicit and implicit messages (Alvarez, 2011). As Ceja (2004) details, “It [is] not so much what the parents said through their direct messages but what these Chicana students perceived to be important, as a consequence of being keenly aware of the conditions and struggles of their parents” (p. 345). The content of these messages span across various topics, including ideas on the ability to be successful in the U.S., the positive outcomes a higher education can provide, and to make smarter educational choices than earlier generations did (Ceja, 2004). Parents also use personal experiences to convey the importance of a higher education to their daughters (Ceja, 2004). One of the most important findings in the Ceja (2004)

study was that parents often engaged in direct messages about doing well in school, but the indirect messages dealt with wanting to have their daughters go to college. In other words, the implicit messages were meant to lead to a perceived understanding that college is a positive step. Adding to Ceja's findings, Alvarez (2015) also found that for parents, their student's journey into higher education is an extension of their own success and the fulfillment of a dream.

Despite the few studies that specifically focus on Latina/o parents, very little is known about their role – and even less is known on how they *engage* in the process itself. Most studies have only examined their role as an outside player in their student's college-going process, but not many have designed studies that place them at the center of the college-going process and as active and reactive players along with their student. Due to this lack of research on parents' college-going, we do not know much about their college-going process, except that parents, during what can be considered as the predisposition phase, already had preconceived ideas for what is possible and what is not in regard to their student attending college (Becerra, 2010). This finding is reinforced through other studies, which find that parents develop their own ideas of what they expect – or hope – their student will do post-high school graduation (Alvarez, 2011, 2015; Ceja, 2004; Valdés, 1996). By virtue of including Latina/o parents in this college-going process study and focusing on how they engage in the process along with their college-going student, this study will address these particular gaps in Latina/o parent college choice literature.

### **Conceptual Models on Latina/o College Choice**

Pertinent conceptual frameworks, models, and theories describing the Latina/o college choice process have been proposed over the last three decades. Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2012) propose an approach to studying Latina/o students' transitions to college. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2012) argue that through an analysis of a household's funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff,

& González, 1992), Latino students' transition to college can be better understood. Furthermore, the authors' approach includes the household as a unit of analysis, but relies on previously acquired data on funds of knowledge. In line with suggestions made by González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) and as Alvarez (2015) followed, this study is based upon data collected through four interviews over the course of a 12-month period and included parents. More recently, Nuñez (2014) developed the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality that addresses how educational opportunity for Latino immigrant student are affected by varying levels of analysis, types of practices, and social categories. Nuñez pushes the field by proposing a model that includes societal factors in which identity, power, and history exist and help shape student educational experience. To do so, she considers several levels of analysis, including: (a) social categories and behaviors; (b) multiple arenas of influence; and (c) historicity. Nuñez contends that in considering these various layers, it is evident that the dominant power relations, practices, and social systems students live in limit educational equity.

A highly-cited model, Perna's Proposed Conceptual Model of Student College Enrollment Behaviors conceptual model was designed to capture both economic and sociological approaches. Perna's (2006) model is comprised of four layers: (a) habitus; (b) school and community context; (c) higher education context; and (d) broader social, economic and policy context, and examines how the individual engages in college-related behaviors – and ultimately, college choice – that are shaped by the aforementioned layers (Perna, 2006). Through the framing of college-choice, we are able to examine how a student's habitus, school and community, social, economic, and policy contexts influence students' post-secondary educational choices. Finally, the Latina/o Student and Parent College-Going Negotiation Model (Alvarez, 2015) incorporated elements proposed by previous scholars and included both student

and parent college-going experiences to provide a new way of understanding college-going for Latina/o families. Alvarez's (2015) model included time and environmental factors, as well as several "negotiation" variables, such as: (a) mental and physical health; (b) separation from/of family; (c) self-sufficiency; (d) academic capabilities; (e) knowledge of the postsecondary education system; (f) financial aid; (g) the value of education; and (h) pressure to fulfill the expectations parents' have for their lives (students only). This model brought a perspective from which to understand the components at play within student and parent college-going process, and provides additional context to the findings in this dissertation.

From state and federal policy to research on institutional efforts and the structural barriers for students, our knowledge of the factors influencing the Latina/o community's trajectory into higher education has increased tenfold over the last decade (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2006; Pérez, 2010; Taggart & Crisp, 2010; Nuñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; González, 2012; Martínez, 2012; Martínez & Cervera, 2012; Rios-Aguilar & Marquez Kiyama, 2012; Nuñez, 2014). Included in this work is research on college preparedness and choice, and within that, there are conceptual and theoretical models on college-going, such as Perna's (2006a) comprehensive Proposed Conceptual Model of Student College Enrollment Behaviors and Alvarez's Latina/o Student and Parent College-Going Negotiation Model (2015) informs Perna's model by providing further detail and insight into what Latina/o students consider as they make post-secondary decisions, and ultimately, assess the benefits and risks of going to college.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

The purpose of this study is to understand the college-going process for Latina/o students and parents. Specifically, this dissertation explores the perspectives, aspirations, expectations, and overall realm of possibilities as they engage in the college-going process. Students' and parents' experience of the college-going process is riddled with emotional work, expectations of themselves and each other, and negotiation and communication as they make sense of their realm of possibilities. The focus of this study calls for conceptual and theoretical frameworks that speak to the dynamics within the family, as well as the ways in which individuals make sense of their environment and situation. Furthermore, the application of grounded theory was especially useful in capturing inductive knowledge gathered from the data. The following chapter will describe each framework and discuss its application to the study.

#### **Familismo**

Conducting an analysis of the family unit requires the appropriate lens that will illuminate the dynamics that exist within it, especially within Latina/o families. *Familismo* is a Latina/o cultural value that emphasizes loyalty and closeness within the family unit; one example being when an individual family member feels the responsibility to put the needs of the family first, even if it leads to personal sacrifices (Sy & Romero, 2008). This is also a characteristic that has been identified in Latino populations (Vega, 1990). When using *familismo* as part of a theoretical framework, it allows us to understand the complex negotiations that take place in a collective context – one that encourages individuals to take each other into consideration when making important life decisions. Applying *familismo* to the college-going process centers the family unit and the communication and negotiations that occur within, and most importantly, highlights the crucial role it plays in considering post-secondary choices for Latina/o students



and parents. Utilizing this framework also allows me to design a study that incorporates the voices of both the Latina/o students and parents as a way of further understanding their college-going process.

## **Habitus**

The concept of *habitus* is one developed by Pierre Bourdieu as part of a larger theoretical framework that seeks to understand issues of structure and power, specifically the reproduction of culture and systems of power (Mahar, Harker, & Wilkes, 1990). Several aspects constitute Bourdieu's theoretical perspectives, including the notions of practice, field, a number of capitals, and *habitus*. Practice can be understood as the daily activities one partakes in with the goal of capturing useful resources and gaining new ways in which to understand one's contextual environment and other's behaviors (McDonough & Nuñez, 2007). The notion of fields is one that points to the arenas of conflict, where culture, power, and stratification lie (McDonough & Nuñez, 2007). These fields are fluid, as they are in constant transformation due to their participants' movement towards increasing their capital (McDonough & Nuñez, 2007; McDonough, Ventresca, & Outcalt, 2000). The capitals, economic, cultural, social, and symbolic, capture the ways in which "people maximize status by accumulating and converting them for profit" (McDonough & Nuñez, 2007, p. 144), which can be used as currency in the social structures that one inhabits. Specifically, economic capital refers to the ownership of financial wealth; cultural capital is attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that are passed along from generation to generation and can include knowledge, culture, and educational credentials; social capital refers the social networks available as a resource that both individuals and families can use for tangible and symbolic profit; and symbolic capital is defined as culturally valued attributes, as well as a set of cultural capitals in relation to each other (McDonough & Nuñez,

2007). Through these different notions, Bourdieu argues that structure and agency are in constant play with each other, and that individuals and groups use these resources in order to rise within the hierarchies of domination (McDonough & Nuñez, 2007). This theoretical framework is centered on the day-to-day dynamics of life and can be used to understand how “individuals and organizations interact, how dominant groups stay in dominant positions, and how rational, thinking, and goal-directed individuals pursue their own personal interests yet manage to create and recreate social structures.” (McDonough & Nuñez, 2007, p. 143).

*Habitus* is specifically useful in this study due to its focus on the ways individuals make sense of their surroundings and their position in society through their perceptions, thoughts, appreciations, dispositions, and actions (McDonough & Nuñez, 2007). Furthermore, *habitus* can be understood as a set of rules that an individual or group play under and which are created by their structural and contextual surroundings and the individual’s or group’s perception of them (Mahar et al., 1990). An individual’s or group’s *habitus*, therefore, is fluid due to the fact that their environment and context is always changing. Important to note is that *habitus* is time and context specific, is shared by members of the same social class or cultural group, it frames individual aspirations, predispositions, and actions, and generates strategies that make possible the achievement of diversified tasks (Bourdieu, 1977; McDonough & Nuñez, 2007). In relation to the remaining aspects of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, *habitus* is perpetually mediated by the field of struggle (McDonough & Nuñez, 2007), it can be linked to capital in that some forms of *habitus* serve to magnify the power of various types of capital, and it can also be seen as a form of symbolic capital (Mahar et al., 1990).

*Habitus* is relevant to this study in that Latina/o students and parents have an established *habitus* during their college-going process. *Habitus* is the means that guides the accumulation

and conversion of capitals, therefore being an integral part of to how Latina/o students and parents make sense of their realm of possibilities and overall college-going process. During the college-going process, Latina/o students and parents go through the process of imagining, considering, and deciding on what colleges they will apply to and perhaps at one point attend. As this time period occurs and progresses, they will imagine, consider, and decide based on what they perceive their options are, what they are capable or incapable of achieving, and basically, follow the rules they perceive are part of their reality. Simply put, when the concept of *habitus* is applied, one has the appropriate lens to analyze how students and parents develop their realms of possibility and experience their college-going process.

### **Grounded Theory**

The use of grounded theory in this study is done with the purpose of capturing information that otherwise is missed by the previous three theoretical frameworks. Grounded theory is a framework that allows the research to capture inductive knowledge, which can be used to create working models or develop initial understandings of the unit of analysis – these emergent understandings can serve to guide the researcher into new lines of questioning and further expand their empirical inquiries (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005). Grounded theory has its theoretical underpinnings in pragmatism and symbolic interaction (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), and two of its more important principles are based on those philosophical and sociological orientations: the first states that because phenomena are in constant transformation, the method of inquiry must remain flexible in order to adapt to those changes, while the second principle suggests that grounded theory not only discover relevant conditions, but also determine the ways in which those being studied react to changing conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Data collection and analysis is central to grounded theory, and a series of procedures have been

developed in order to remain true to the purpose of grounded theory. These include the belief that data collection and analysis are interrelated processes, that concepts are the basic units of analysis, that categories must be developed and related, that sampling in grounded theory proceeds on theoretical grounds, that analysis makes use of constant comparisons, that patterns and variations must be accounted for, that process must be built into the theory, that writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing theory, that hypotheses about relationships among categories should be developed and verified as much as possible during the research process, that a grounded theorist need not work alone, and that broader structural conditions must be analyzed, however microscopic the research (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Furthermore, grounded theory is applicable to both quantitative and qualitative analysis (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005). This study incorporates grounded theory by capturing emergent knowledge throughout the college-going process for students and parents. With this perspective in mind, findings regarding the emotional work done by students and parents through their college-going process were identified and folded into the discussion of college-going.

Understanding the college-going experience of students and parents, and accounting for the complexity of such process, requires that the data be viewed and analyzed under multiple lenses. The combination of familismo, habitus, and grounded theory will provide the necessary lens for an analytical comprehension of students' and parents' emotional work, expectations, and the communication and negotiation of their realm of possibility. The following chapter will discuss the methodological steps taken to develop this study, as well as provide vignettes of the families involved in the study.

## **Chapter 4: Methods**

The dynamics and complexities that occur during the college-going process cannot be fully understood with a one-time interview or survey. Taking that into account, this study was designed to allot for a proper period where the college-going process can be observed. The use of qualitative methods was decided upon for very particular reasons, the first of which was the potential to capture the complexities of social interaction (Bogden & Biklen, 2007) through the probing of emergent issues. Second, a qualitative approach gave way to gather rich data that quantitative methods could not afford. Investigating the dynamic and multi-layered complexity that is the college-going process for Latina/o students and parents through a qualitative approach yielded valuable data that in the future can be used to strategize ways to increase Latina/o access into higher education. Furthermore, taking a phenomenological approach to this study made possible an analysis of the college-going process for students and parents that focused on the phenomena of everyday life (Merriam, 2009). This approach allowed me to make the ordinary unordinary and was particularly useful when conceptualizing the study, especially because the college-going process is one that encompasses day-to-day thoughts, feelings, expectations, and decisions. The following section outlines the site description, sample and recruitment, data collection, and data analysis for this phenomenological study. The chapter will end with an acknowledgement of the researcher's positionality, limitations of the study, and vignettes of each of the participating families.

### **Site Description**

The Coachella Valley is located in a remote regions of southern California. However, over the decades the Coachella Valley has developed its own suburban quality. A locale that offers Angelenos an escape via dozens of spa resorts, hotels, and golf courses, the lack of access

to and completion of higher education that a large portion of the population experiences is often masked by the Valley's demographic diversity. The split runs down the middle of the Valley – the west end houses middle- and upper-class families, while the residents on the east end (with the exception of recently-built housing on the north side of the I-10 freeway) tend to be working-class poor. From the almost 432,596 people that reside in the entire Coachella Valley, 51.8 percent are Hispanic/Latino (Coachella Valley Economic Partnership [CVEP], 2012). Las Palmas, the city in which the research participants lived, is located in the east end of the Valley. Las Palmas had a median income of \$36,355, while 22.3 percent of families lived below the poverty level (CVEP, 2012).

At the time of data collection, there were three local venues for accessing higher education: CSU San Bernardino-Palm Desert Campus, UC Riverside-Palm Desert, and College of the Desert (COD). The more recent of the two, CSUSB-Palm Desert Campus opened in 2001 and now offers undergraduate courses in 16 different fields, while UCR-Palm Desert opened in 2002 and exclusively offers graduate education via Executive MBA and MFA programs. While these two campuses are fairly new, COD has been a Coachella Valley mainstay; founded in 1958, COD offers technical degrees and provides transferable General Education courses for four-year institutions. When considering of college accessibility for students in the Coachella Valley, despite the existence of both CSUSB-Palm Desert and COD, college-going is still low: as of Spring 2012, CSUSB-Palm Desert served 1,000 students, while COD had 9,579 students enrolled (CVEP, 2012). These demographics show that the subpopulation in most need for access into higher education are Latinas/os in the Coachella Valley. Gathering data from a site such as this one provided a start in learning more of how Latina/o students and parents experience, perceive, and communicate through the college-going process.

## **Sample & Recruitment**

Given the purpose of this study and the research questions guiding this research project, the data was retrieved using purposive sampling (Creswell, 1998, 2003) and participants met specific criteria. All families involved were self-identified as Latina/o and of a working-class and middle-class background. The socioeconomic status was important because the data would then provide a true picture of the families located in the eastern side of the Coachella Valley. The students could be either first-generation or second-generation in the U.S., as well as first-to-go to college. At the time of the study, the student must have been enrolled as a senior in high school and be highly interested in attending a higher education institution which could include a community college, vocational/trade school, or a four-year university. To embed variability into the study, both Latina and Latino students were included in the study. Building in variation to the study via gender was helpful in producing quality results and a strong qualitative study. Furthermore, and as indicated in the literature review, past research on Latina/o college choice has mostly focused on students, while not much is known about parents in relation to the college-going process, especially when the data is gathered in conjunction with their student. Consequently, Latina/o parents were included in this study to further understand how they themselves experience the college-going process along with their children. The data collected for this study came from 13 families.

The strategies in recruitment were done in a specific manner, informed by past studies and past research experience. In regards to Latina/o parents and their participation in qualitative research studies, it can be difficult to recruit them as research participants. One key study on recruitment of first-generation Latinos in rural communities highlights the importance of personal contact in achieving positive recruitment results (Rodriguez, Rodriguez, & Davis,

2006). The researchers point to the difficulty in recruitment due to the historical mistreatment of ethnic minorities by researchers (Rodriguez et al., 2006), although not directly linked to Latina/o population, one can perhaps understand the untrusting nature of participating in research when we recall the Tuskegee syphilis study and its repercussions, which left the African American community to be suspicious and distrustful of research (Jones, 1981). Rodriguez et al. (2006) suggest a series of recruitment strategies – including familiarizing the participants with the study, having bilingual researchers, and translating the research study in a conceptual manner rather than in a literal translation of materials (Rodriguez et al., 2006). My personal research experience with Latina/o parents reiterates what Rodriguez and her colleagues mention in their study. I have found that those who are not familiar with research – what it is, how it is done, who reads it – tend to be unsure and untrusting of the data collection process itself. An example of this came when I previously conducted a study that involved parents and their daughters (Alvarez, 2010, 2011) in which I recruited the parents with the help of female students who participated in a community soccer league. At that time I thought that because parents attended the soccer matches it would be fairly easy to convince them to participate in my study, but that proved to be untrue. These particular parents – most of whom were immigrants to this country and had not attended higher education institutions in the U.S. – felt unsure of what I was attempting to do and generally felt a sense of distrust in giving me access to their thoughts and perspectives. After countless conversations about my study and what would become of it – in addition to having to explain my educational background and reasons of getting a Ph.D. – a few parents agreed to participate. Keeping this gained knowledge in mind became useful in the development of the methodological procedures for my dissertation.



Given the issues inherent in recruiting parents – and as an extension, their students – who have a lack of exposure to research and its necessary procedures, I took specific steps in order to gain the best result possible. I recruited my research participants by engaging in snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Marshall, 1996) and accessed them through individuals they already trust, such as school staff and through local youth programs. Accordingly, I recruited parents and their children at the beginning of the children’s senior year of high school through members in the community whom they trust, such as school staff and from local youth programs. The first recruitment step was to go through the local high school. After receiving permission from the high school principal, I proceeded to distribute flyers through the high school teachers, counselors, and staff containing basic information about the study and my contact information (in both English and Spanish) to hand out to students and parents who fit the criteria for the study. I also participated in several events put on by the high school, such as Parent Night and Senior Studies Night to talk to the parents about my experience going through the educational pipeline and to provide information about my study. This strategy proved to be the most effective, as I was able to connect with the parents with my background and story, and the teachers could all vouch for my legitimacy as a student of the community. An additional advantage to this strategy was that I had the opportunity to hold Q&A sessions for a few minutes after my talk, and my bilingual skills proved to be crucial to connecting with the parents and making them feel comfortable with the project I presented. I sat outside the auditorium after the presentations and answered questions from students or parents. I also handed out flyers with my contact information and kept a sign-up sheet for those that were willing to volunteer. This strategy yielded about 16 families, all whom were very eager to help in completing my studies. The second recruitment step was to visit the local community youth center and spend time

talking to the staff and to students who came in to take advantage of the variety of services offered, such as a access to a recording studio, game arcade, computers, barber shop, basketball and soccer fields, and a boxing gym. This was a great space in which to recruit students who would not necessarily be in the school staff's radar due to their G.P.A.s or involvement in school activities. After spending three weeks at the center and making myself a familiar figure, I was able to recruit four students and their families. However, after the first round of interviews, three families dropped from the study, resulting in a total of 13 families from whom I had complete data.

### **Data Collection**

Upon securing the participating families, I began the data collection phase. The participants were interviewed separately to avoid the observer effect (Bogden & Biklen, 2007) – this ensured that the individuals provided responses that were not influenced by the presence of any other individual. Each student and each set of parents were interviewed four times over a 12-month period, resulting in 105 interviews. The four time periods included (See Figure 1):

1. Before students applied to any institution (beginning of senior year of high school)
2. After they applied to higher education institutions of their choice but before they received admissions notifications
3. After receiving admissions notifications but before making a final decisions
4. After decision deadlines passed and a few months had passed to capture whether the family's plans were followed through

For the cases in which attendance to a higher education institution did not occur, the last interview covered future plans. Each interview was one hour long, at a location and in a language (English or Spanish) of their choice, and all occurring between the student's Fall semester of

their senior year of high school and until the Fall after their high school graduation. The parental units were composed of both couples and single mothers of working-class background, and with the exception of two parents who had attained Associate degree and two parents who had a Bachelor's degree and identified as middle-class, all had no formal post-secondary education in the United States.

The design of this study was done so in order to capture the evolving nature of the college-going process for each the families. Multiple data collection points also allowed me to capture students' and parents' feelings, expectations, and perspectives that changed over time. Simply stated, both students' and parents' thoughts, perspectives, aspirations, and expectations change as the context morphs – and all those will be reactions to the new contexts.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews collected through this study were transcribed as soon as they were conducted, and each interview's audio-tape recording was compared with the transcripts in order to ensure accuracy. Prior to the second, third, and fourth interviews the transcripts were briefly analyzed in order to ask participants about specific issues that arose or any clarifications that had to be made on the information collected (Kvale, 1996). In addition, theoretical memos were written at the end of the majority of the interviews to capture the initial impressions, theoretical thoughts, and connections to literature-based themes. The act of memoing proved helpful when beginning the formal analysis period and was a key component of enacting grounded theory.

The data was then coded systematically. First, the data was coded inductively for emergent themes, and therefore used grounded theory as a guide for this method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The emergent themes were then identified across all transcripts, which yielded 49 unique codes for all 13 interviews. These were then systematically coded for emergent themes,

of which three major umbrella categories were chosen to be highlighted in this dissertation. These three major umbrella categories included emotions, expectations, and communications/aspirations. The coding details will be discussed in their forthcoming corresponding chapters.

### **Role of the Researcher/Positionality**

The inception of this study was born from a desire to improve the social conditions of the Latina/o community. The statistics, previously discussed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, shows us that our continued efforts to increase Latina/o access to higher education is very much still needed and be crucial in the coming decades. As a Chicana/Latina/Mexican-American, my personal agenda of making college access a possibility for members of my community influences my choice for this field of study and my research agenda. As a researcher and member of the academic community, I hold a sense of duty and commitment to use my resources, knowledge, and skills to aid in the aforementioned efforts.

As an individual that grew up in the community where the research study took place, I have an insider's knowledge of the people, the culture, and organizations that play a role in the participants' lives. It is this familiarity of the community that provided me access to my target population and gave me credibility in their eyes. In addition, this insider status may have played a role in the interest in participation and may or may not have encouraged them to open up and discuss sensitive issues with me.

On the other hand, my identity as a graduate student/researcher – my outsider status – may have influenced the type of people who chose to participate in the study. Furthermore, my outsider status may have also influenced the way my research participants interacted with me during the interviews. As a young Chicana who is in a doctoral program at a top research

university, that aspect of my identity may have intimidated the parents and their child, thus leading them to not respond honestly about concerns they had about college or to not fully disclose a lack of knowledge on college information. In addition, the fact that I am young in age compared to the parents and only a few years older than their child may have made it difficult for them to disclose certain sensitive information about their beliefs to me.

In reading the proposed methods for this study, one gets a sense of just how intimate these interviews can be and of how privileged we, as researchers and practitioners, are to be let into our research participants' homes to find the answers for the questions we have. Overall, I am fully cognizant of how my positionality – and all the identities that are part of me – can impact the creation of the study, the types of questions I asked, the responses I received, and the interpretations I made of the data. Therefore, it is my goal to present all data in this study in the most transparent manner possible in order to honor the process of qualitative research and to create a study that is worthwhile to read and from which to learn.

The following section will provide contextual information for each of the participating families, as they will be necessary to understanding the complexity of the findings in this study.

### **Vignettes: The Families of Las Palmas**

**Familia Carrillo.** Sofía Carrillo was the youngest of five children, had a warm, friendly presence, and loved participating in Theatre at her high school. She was the last one in her family to possibly enroll in a four-year higher education institution straight after high school; her two older sisters had gone to C.O.D. and transferred to the CSU San Bernardino - Palm Desert campus and her older brother had attended a vocational college. Sofía dreamed of studying Theatre, but had shifted her goals to one day getting a Ph.D and opening a private child psychology clinic or a foster home. Despite feeling scared, this dreamed seemed all the more

feasible given that she had managed to boost her grades and was set to graduate among the top of her class. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo, were born and raised in Mexico and had very limited formal education that did not go beyond a high school-equivalent level. Mrs. Carrillo was a cheerful woman, a great conversationalist, and exuded vibrant yet nervous energy. She worked as a housekeeper and at times took care of children, and in her spare time tended to the home and family needs, as well as was very involved in her county's Migrant Program. Mr. Carrillo was a stoic man, at first quiet and resistant to talk, but relaxed and warmed up as our interviews continued. He had long worked as a day laborer and gardener. Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo were overall supportive of Sofía pursuing a higher education, but they did not see eye-to-eye on a number of details. Although the communication between Sofía and Mrs. Carrillo was strong, the relationship between Sofía and Mr. Carrillo was not. This relationship, in addition to their college-going process, was exacerbated by the family's financial situation. At the beginning of the interview process, both Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo found themselves unemployed, and the repercussions were felt during their everyday lives. Understandably so, the family's unexpected financial situation also played a strong role in their college-going process. Nonetheless, the family's faith and strong work ethic pushed them forward during the times when the college-going process proved to be stressful and complicated.

**Familia Cuellar.** Michael Cuellar had a passion for golf. On his spare time he could be found practicing his swing at the local public golf course, dreaming and thinking of a possible future of college-level play at the CSU level. His good grades poised him for college attendance, which would make him only the second generation in his family to go to college. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Cuellar, had been first-generation college students. Mr. Cuellar had been a student athlete at UC Berkeley, received an M.A., and was now an administrator at Michael's high

school. Mr. Cuellar was friendly and had a very optimistic outlook in life. Mrs. Cuellar was the self-proclaimed worrier of the family. She was a doting mother who made sure Michael stayed on top of his school work and college applications, while also making the calls necessary to bring college golf scouts to Michael's matches. Mrs. Cuellar's college experience was a bit different from her husband's - she attended a private university that allowed her to live at her family home, so she never experienced the on-campus dorm life her husband did. Also making it a unique experience was her surprise pregnancy while she was in college. Expecting and raising Michael with the help from her family made her college experience a bit tougher than most traditional students, but her tenacity and family's support helped her achieve a B.A. and eventually work at the school district level. The personal and academic backgrounds of Mr. and Mrs. Cuellar, and their access to resources, combined to provide Michael not only a comfortable middle-class lifestyle, but with strong guidance through the college-going process as well.

**Familia González.** I met Luciano at Las Palmas' teen center. He was polite, quiet, and friendly, and very candid about his thoughts. He hoped to one day be an entomologist or a musician, but felt unsure on the exact steps needed to achieve that goal. His dream college was UC Riverside, but after failing to meet the application deadlines, Luciano modified his plans to include C.O.D., CSU San Bernardino, and New Mexico, Highlands as his options for college-going. Complicating his achievement of his aspirations was his reluctance to seek guidance or advice from teachers or other authority figures. His anxiety led him to avoid asking for help and would rather find the information through a friend or his mother. Mrs. González had recently separated from Luciano's father, leaving her to care for Luciano and a younger son on her own. Decades ago Mrs. González had gone straight from high school to a four-year institution but dropped out after a year and has since been in the process of completing her A.A. while working

at a local school district. Through the interviews Mrs. González revealed that she had sheltered Luciano too much and felt that perhaps this influenced his perspective and experience through the college-going process. Both Luciano and Mrs. González had little or incorrect information on college-related deadlines, which made their experience through the college-going process much more tumultuous.

**Familia Hernández.** Ricardo Hernández lived in a comfortable home with his two Mexican-born parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hernández. Ricardo's love for soccer dominated his world - had played soccer from an early age and currently played for his high school's Varsity team. He knew college was in his future and was most interested in attending CSU Fullerton and hoped to play soccer for their team. Ricardo was not a talkative teen, and was guarded at first, but opened up about his thoughts and emotions as our meetings progressed. Mr. and Mrs. Hernández were completely opposite to Ricardo's demeanor. They were delighted to have someone to talk to about these issues and passionately answered all of my questions. Their thoughtfulness and warmth was evident when on each one of my visits they had tea, coffee, and snacks ready for me to enjoy. Mr. Hernández had attended a university for two years in Mexicali, Mexico but never completed his degree, while Mrs. Hernández finished her high school-equivalent degree, also in Mexico. They were both driven to send Ricardo to college, but Mr. Hernández was the one constantly pushing Ricardo to complete his college applications, reminding him to apply for scholarships, and making sure he maintained focus. This proved to be a point of contention given that Ricardo was much more focused on soccer than his college application process, and that gave Mr. Hernández to countless frustrating days. Although at times Mr. and Mrs. Hernández wondered if Ricardo would go to college given a couple of issues that occurred along their



college-going process, their faith never wavered and their hope to see Ricardo earn a college degree kept them pushing down their path.

**Familia Marín.** Luisa was a Theatre kid - very expressive, excited for her future, and positively cheerful on a day-to-day basis. Just like Sofía Carrillo, she planned to major in Theatre once in college somewhere in the East Coast. Mr. and Mrs. Marín were a very welcoming couple, but it was Mr. Marín's joyful demeanor and zest for life that outshone on every visit. Mr. Marín was the owner of a small fast-food shop that had been struggling ever since the economic recession in 2008, but the family was also struggling after the bursting of the housing bubble in 2007 and caught themselves involved in the thick of it with very large mortgage payments. However, for the Marín's, college-going was inevitable. From the onset of our interview period, all members of the Marín family appeared in agreement that Luisa would be continuing her post-secondary education. However, no Marín knew exactly how that plan would become a reality. Like many other Latina/o families – as well as first-generation families – being little or completely uninformed on how to get to college is not uncommon, and the Marín's were an example. Mr. and Mrs. Marín were born in Mexico, but arrived to the U.S. as teenagers and completed their high school education in the U.S. Mr. Marín did not pursue higher education, but Mrs. Marín was enrolled for two months at a college in Missouri. However, Mrs. Marín's responsibility of helping her single mother financially left her with no choice but to forgo college. As Mrs. Marín remarked multiple times (and to which Mr. Marín agreed), she did not continue her education not because she did not want to, but because she was not able to. Lacking significant first-hand college-going experience did not leave Mr. and Mrs. Marín feeling confident in their knowledge of how to apply to college, but Luisa's involvement in her high school's college-going program provided a lot of information and guidance.

**Familia Martínez.** Guadalupe Martínez had dreams of attending Johns Hopkins and pursuing a career in medicine, and had worked very hard to make that dream a reality. She was on track to graduating among the very top of her class, and with the help of her high school's college-going program, she was on the path to achieve her goals. Upon meeting Guadalupe, she came across as soft-spoken and thoughtful, and her friendliness created a warm environment for every meeting we had. She shared her home with a younger brother and her single mother, Mrs. Martínez. Mrs. Martínez had attended C.O.D. many years prior, earned her A.A., and now worked for the judicial courts. Mrs. Martínez spoke a lot about raising Guadalupe to be an independent woman, to not be afraid of reaching her goals, and to use education as a means to achieving a healthy and stable life. During this same period, Mrs. Martínez's sister - Mrs. Ochoa - also had a daughter, Melina, who was undergoing the same process. Guadalupe and Melina were very close but had very different personalities, and due to their strong relationship, their journeys influenced one another.

**Familia Mejía.** Chris Mejía was an outgoing teen who was involved in every activity he could and was very popular at his school. Chris played golf and football, but had to limit his play in order to focus on the grades that had suffered. College-going was never a question for him, but rather seen as a natural step to take after high school graduation. His older sister was graduating from San Francisco State, and although he was not sure he would enroll there as well, he kept it a possibility. Chris' college-going process did not include concerns about finances; Mr. and Mrs. Mejía had long-developed a financial plan to make college possible for Chris. Mr. Mejía had been working with the city of Las Palmas for many years, and along with Mrs. Mejía, had created a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. Mrs. Mejía was a high school graduate and attended C.O.D. for a few years but dropped out before earning a degree, while Mr. Mejía received a

certificate from C.O.D. and confessed that the job he currently had would not have been possible in current times with his educational background. The Mejías were very confident on their college-going plans due to their prior successful experience with the oldest of the family and looked forward to achieving their college-going plans as a family.

**Familia Mendoza.** Jose Mendoza was a reserved, thoughtful young man who had carefully planned the every-step needed to achieve his life goals of becoming a practicing veterinarian in Mexico. Meticulously detailing his achievements and goals, Jose shared the reasons behind joining his high school's Future Farmers of America program, how he raised and sold pigs at the County Fair, and his dream of attending Cal Poly Pomona. He had also earned high marks throughout high school and was graduating among the top of his class. His love for animals came from his parents, particularly from his father, Mr. Mendoza. Mr. Mendoza was born and raised in Jalisco, Mexico, studied up to second grade, and came to the U.S. in the 1980s to work. He currently worked at a restaurant but traveled to Mexico whenever he could in order to tend to a farm he had purchased years ago. He had very kind eyes, sweetly referred to his wife as "Flaca," and answered my questions with as few words as possible. Mrs. Mendoza was also born and raised in Jalisco, Mexico, but was able to receive a bit more formal education compared to her husband - she studied up to the sixth grade level. She had an easy time sharing her thoughts and would happily explain the details of any plans her family had and how proud she was that Jose was doing well in school and interested in college. Both Mr. and Mrs. Mendoza enjoyed a very close relationship with Jose and encouraged him to pursue any dreams he had. Although their lack of college knowledge was a barrier, they whole-heartedly believed that Jose would use the resources in his high school to make the right choices.

**Familia Novoa.** Andres Novoa was outgoing, a devout Christian, and a top-performing long-distance runner at his high school. His older brother had graduated from college, and although he was interested in furthering his education, Andres was more interested in attending college in order to continue his stellar running career. His relationship was strongest with his father and a bit contentious with his mother due to his self-described “stubbornness.” Mr. Novoa graduated from a local high school and joined the U.S. Armed Forces upon high school graduation. His life in the military led him to live outside California, and his experiences from these travels informed a lot of the advice he would give Andres. Mrs. Novoa, on the other hand, was born and raised in Mexico, where she studied up until middle school. She contributed to the family finances by working as a housekeeper. All three of the Novoas entertained my questions, but it was Mrs. Novoa who was the most forthcoming with her emotions, fears, and frustrations throughout the college-going process.

**Familia Ochoa.** Melina Ochoa was the cousin of Guadalupe Martínez, and the two of them shared a very strong bond. Melina was shy, extremely thoughtful and considerate of others, and very devoted to her family’s needs, especially those of her younger brother who had a speech impediment. Melina’s goal was to one day be a speech therapist, and had worked very hard to get into college straight after high school, but struggled between staying at the local community college or leaving the area to attend a four-year institution. Her parents were very supportive of Melina’s aspirations, especially given that neither of them had a college degree. Mr. Ochoa was born and raised in Mexico, studied until sixth grade, and came to the U.S. for work. He was very shy about his English-speaking skills, which resulted in very interesting interviews: him and I would communicate in Spanish, while Mrs. Ochoa and I would communicate in English. Mrs. Ochoa was raised in the U.S., graduated from high school, and

attended C.O.D. for a short while without receiving a degree or certificate. She was the driving force of the family, with a very strong and confident demeanor, and determined to see Melina go to college. Mrs. Ochoa struggled with figuring out how they would send Melina to college and which pathway was the best to take, but she tenaciously led her family onward.

**Familia Padilla.** Nicolas Padilla, a Mexican-born, US.-raised student who would be the first in his family to attend a higher education institution in the U.S., had no clue what college would be like. However, his outgoing personality and leadership abilities made him feel confident that he would overcome any obstacle that came his way. A very involved high school student, his goal was to graduate in the top of his class and attend UCLA, his dream school. His mother was very supportive of his dreams, and although his father was too, Mr. Padilla did not clearly express those feelings. Mr. Padilla was a very serious, direct, no-fuss patriarch who had moved his family to the U.S. with the single goal of sending his children to college. He received the equivalent to a Bachelor's degree in Mexico, but had zero experience with the education system in the U.S. Mrs. Padilla completed middle school and then studied to be a secretary. Now in the U.S., Mr. and Mrs. Padilla made their living selling tamales from grocery store parking lots. The Padilla family struggled with finding financial stability, and although the likelihood of receiving federal and state financial aid was high and Nicolas was a top student, the concerns about their ability to pay for college remained constant through their college-going process.

**Familia Ramírez.** Carolina Ramírez was a studious, CSI-loving teen who dreamed of being a forensic scientist. Despite having a delayed-speech impediment and a history of fighting with schools to keep her integrated in college-track courses, she was well on her way to making her college dreams a reality. Mrs. Ramírez was her biggest supporter - she was a single mother who fiercely loved and fought for Carolina to take the courses she needed to be eligible and

ready for college. Mrs. Ramírez studied at the college level in Mexico, but came to the U.S. and now had an office job, and for years her efforts had been focused on sending Carolina to college and give her the opportunity to become an independent young adult.

**Familia Santillán.** Ariana Santillán was an independent, strong-willed, college-bound young woman who dreamed of living an adventurous life in the East Coast. Ariana was on the college-bound track in her high school, achieving a spot in the top 10 of her graduating class. Although she overall felt confident in achieving her dreams even if only by grit, she did not feel emotionally or financially supported by her mother, Mrs. Santillán, and their relationship was riddled with miscommunication and tension. Mrs. Santillán was a high school graduate in the US and had taken a few night classes at the local community college, but never completed due to dropping out and gaining full-time employment. Although never specifically explained, Mrs. Santillán was once married, but her husband was out of the picture. Questions were never answered on whether his absence was due to death or a strained relationship. However, it was made clear by Ariana that when she was a child she used to live in a home her parents owned, which was lost after her father was out of the picture, and then Ariana and her mother were forced to move to a small apartment unit. This information became relevant, and an explanatory source for Ariana's aspirations and the family dynamics in her household.

These families were integral to the successful completion to this study, and I forever am indebted to them for helping me achieve my own dream of earning a Ph.D. What follows are their stories.

## **Chapter 5: The Emotional Work Behind the College-Going Process**

In approaching this study I was particularly fascinated with the emotional aspect of the CGP. I intentionally included questions about fears and motivations in my interview protocols based on past experiences talking with students and parents who described CGP as “very emotional.” However, never did I expect the overwhelming response to these questions. Spending 12 months with students and parents and listening to them describe the varying emotions they experienced while attempting their journey into institutions of higher education clearly showed the high importance of including this aspect of CGP into our understandings of Latina/o college-going. With over three decades of research focusing on Latina/o college-going (Baker & Vélez, 1996; Ceja, 2001, 2004; Cerna et al., 2006; Gándara, 1995; Hearn, 1991; Pérez, 1999; Pérez & Ceja, 2015; Pérez, et al., 2010; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Rogers, et al., 2006; Pérez & McDonough, 2008; Sanchez, et al., 2006; Swail, et al., 2004), our understanding of the emotional aspect of the CGP remains limited.

Fascinatingly enough, such importance of asking about this topic was evident in the data analysis: “Emotions” was coded over 1,300 times across 105 transcripts. Coding for emotions was meant to capture the varying emotions experienced, including feeling happy, scared, anxious, nervous, excited, and fulfilled. Among the numerous findings, two themes were particularly salient. The first focused on the emotions - particularly the fears - students and parents experienced when going through the CGP. Not particularly surprising was that most every parent felt some level of apprehension or fear about sending their child to college, and similarly, most every student identified with having fears about transitioning to college. However, the ways in which these feelings were faced depended on their knowledge and familiarity of the U.S. higher education system, and to some extent, their access to “people in the

know.” The second theme highlights the emotional roller coaster felt by families. Familiarity and knowledge of the U.S. higher education system and the CGP elicits more extreme ups and downs if the families hold little to no knowledge of the higher education system or if they are confused by the CGP.

In essence, the importance of highlighting the emotional journey of students and parents through the CGP goes beyond simply acknowledging that the emotions exist. Discussing the emotions experienced by these families reveals two overarching realities: (a) emotions held can lead to particular actions in the midst of the CGP, and (b) emotions experienced are a reflection of the family’s knowledge and familiarity of the CGP, and therefore further highlighting that lack of knowledge, awareness, or familiarity has repercussions that greatly impact the future and direction of Latina/o families. This chapter presents the findings related to the emotions students and parents felt as they experienced their CGP.

### **Emotions & the (Un)Familiarity With the U.S. Higher Education System**

The act of sending a child to college typically elicits an emotional response from parents. For the student, the act of going to college - and the process s/he engages in to get there - is also an emotional one. Although this is a part of the general experience of the CGP, there are varying ways in which students and parents confront the emotions felt during CGP. For those who do not have familiarity or knowledge of the U.S. higher education system or do not feel comfortable accessing their networks who might be in the know, fears and apprehensions can magnify and lead to their fears and anxiety growing, and in some cases, reconsidering their CGP trajectory. On the contrary, students and parents who have knowledge or familiarity with the U.S. higher education system and feel comfortable contacting people in their networks who are familiar with the system have the ability to counteract those fears and anxieties with strategies, solutions, or



comfort. Overall, although all students and parents feel an array of emotions during the CGP, those who understand what going to college entails and know what to expect are able to not be consumed by those fears and concerns in the same way that their counterparts are.

Regarding overall concerns about college, Nicolas Padilla, a Mexican-born, US-raised student who would be the first in his family to attend a higher education institution in the U.S., did not have a clue on what the college life would be like. Although his father received the equivalent to a Bachelor's degree in Mexico, the parents had zero experience with the education system in the U.S. During our first interview, Nicolas shared his concerns about college, saying,

I mean, there's movies and it's like college parties, but in real life, I'm pretty scared to go to college. I don't know what to expect. I know it's going to be hard. It's not going to be the same as high school, nowhere near the same as high school, and there's going to be many more people. There are going to be different things to be experienced and stuff like that but I'm not sure.

Although Nicolas' family, and particularly his mother, offered emotional support, they did not have the necessary knowledge of what college life would be like to be able to explain to him what to expect.

Similarly, Carolina Ramírez felt worried about what dorm-living would be like, and just like the Padilla family, her mother did not have experience in the U.S. higher education system. Upon our first meeting, Carolina shared,

I guess I'm a little bit worried about living in the dorms. It's not exactly the roommate part that I'm worried about, it's more like how is the actual lifestyle of the dorms? All I know is that you just have like two beds in the dorm and then down the hall is the bathroom, but I'm kind of wondering how is it privacy wise? Do they change their

clothes right in front of each other, or do they just go to the bathroom and change and come back out? Nobody really tends to talk about those things. I'm a little bit curious about that.

A common concern during the first interview and across students was related to homesickness and feeling lonely. Guadalupe Martínez and Ricardo Hernández, respectively, felt particularly concerned about this topic. Both being first-generation Mexican Americans and first-generation college students, their families could not share personal experiences of college to them. They said,

Leaving home, I think is my worry and the big change from living with my family, seeing them every day to not seeing them every day, probably maybe once-a-month kind of thing. What if I don't meet anyone that I get along with, or what if my dormmates I don't like, and what if there's laws, that kind of stuff. What if I go in and I'm doing really bad, I just fail all my classes? Those are my worries.

I want to adapt to my environment and since I'm not going to be close to my parents. I will have to eat over there since I won't have my parents to make me food. Probably the fear of being lonely, not having anyone to talk to and the fear of just getting there and being by yourself. Basically being isolated in college.

Furthermore, students who do not have parents or family members to rely on when it comes to being "prepped" or exposed to what college will be like may find alternate ways of getting to that information, such as through a college awareness program like AVID or Upward Bound. During our last interview, Ariana Santillán shared of how her older brother was accepted to a four-year institution years prior, and due to the lack of information relayed to him about the

CGP, he was not able to transition from high school to college successfully. Ariana further explains,

He was lost the whole time. He didn't know what to sign up for, he didn't know what to do, and he kind of just had that intuition like, 'This is going to be easy. I don't need help.' But in the long run, he didn't sign up for his housing until, like, the last 30 minutes before that site closed, because he didn't know what he was doing. He didn't know anything. He chose not to call, not to ask questions. He chose not to sign up for the program that I did. And the more you are involved in it, the easier it is to transition. I am so freakin' lucky for the fact that I did [AVID], because had I not, I wouldn't know anything. I wouldn't know who to talk to, how professors felt, what my resources are. I wouldn't even know what the library looked like.

However, for students whose parents had experience with U.S. higher education and the CGP, their general concerns about the CGP were mitigated, either because their parents went to college themselves or had older children who successfully transitioned into college, or were of a socioeconomic status where they could financially afford to take steps to counteract those fears, such as taking campus tours.

Michael Cuellar, whose parents both went to four-year universities in the U.S. and were first-generation college students themselves, the CGP was very different from their first-generation counterparts. Although Michael had concerns about college life, having parents who knew about campus tours and who had the financial capabilities to visit him in college in case he did get homesick, helped him push those worries away. During our second interview, Michael shared,

Then I went to visit San Marcos and I was like, ‘Oh these will probably be like little shacks or something.’ I went in and they had nice dorms. I was like, ‘Okay, I can get used to this, this isn’t that bad.’ It’s a four-room, so you have four different roommates or something like that. They have a bed, a couple of desks and stuff, bunk beds, and stuff like that, but it just looked so nice and like the school where they cared about their students and stuff. Little things like that made me feel comfortable.

Once Michael had been accepted to his college of choice and was making detailed plans on moving out of his home, thoughts about leaving home began to enter his mind. Michael further hinted about his parents’ abilities to visit him in college as he explained his worries about college, saying,

I’m not really nervous about the school. I’m nervous about the biggest thing, [that] I’m going to be away from my family. That’s the only thing I think I’m going to miss. The house, I don’t care, it’s the people inside of it. I think that’s the only thing I’m really going to miss.

Similarly to the Cuellar parents, the Mejía parents also had experience with U.S. higher education and the CGP. Mr. Mejía had attended community college decades ago and had earned an A.A., as well as had successfully helped their oldest daughter transition into a four-year institution in California. The Mejía parents knew what to expect, and Chris did as well, which worked to ease their concerns regarding college-going. Soon after receiving admissions notifications from colleges and being accepted to San Francisco State, Chris shared,

I care a lot about them, but my dad’s told me before, ‘If you go to San Francisco, I’m going to go visit you all the time.’ So I’m like, ‘I don’t really have to worry about him being sad if he’s going to come visit me.’ It was maybe a little awkward. I was like, ‘[My

sister] was there, why didn't you go visit her?' 'She's a girl.' I was like, 'Touché!' So I don't think I'll really worry about it on that aspect. Probably my mom, and I'll probably miss my mom, too, miss the cooking, everything. So probably that a little bit.

Students also shared their concerns about college-level academics. Students who did not have parents with a U.S. higher education often did not know the resources colleges make available to students, such as tutoring and office hours with professors and teaching assistants. Being unaware of such services, and not having parents who could share that knowledge with them, made students feel weary about how they'd fare in college and whether they would be able to meet the academic rigors of college. This was a concern for Guadalupe Martínez from very early on, and during our first interview she shared,

I'm not sure if it's going to be a complete 180 and I'm not going to be sure about it. I'm not going to be used to how I'm supposed to study. In high school, you take multiple choice in tests and in college, you take essay tests. That kind of stuff, I'm not sure if that's going to be bad, if I'm going to do bad in that kind of stuff.

A few weeks later, once applications deadlines had passed but before admissions notifications were sent, a conversation on things that worried her emerged. When asked about any fears or concerns she had about college, Sofía Carrillo also shared,

The only thing I've thought, or thought to myself, is I don't know because I'd have to be in that position to really know what [college] is like or think of what it's like. I'm kind of scared to go to college because I know it's going to be a big difference. It's not going to be, the classes are not going to be the same, the teachers are not going to be the same, the buildings, nothing, nothing's going to be the same. Maybe I'll be excited, maybe I'll be

more scared, maybe I'll just be like, 'Well it's college, here I come,' you know? I'm not really sure.

During that same time frame other students shared their ideas on how they would do once in college. Students who felt confident about meeting the academic rigors of college had some knowledge of how AP courses prepared students for college. For example, Chris Mejía shared,

I'll probably struggle a little bit and then end up getting used to the whole routine and everything. I think with all the AP classes and stuff I've been taking, I've kind of been prepared for the workload and how I have less time in high school and hopefully I'll get more time in college because [the workload] is more spaced out. I feel like I'll be able to adapt to it, but it'll probably just take me a little bit of time.

Chris knew that having taken AP courses in high school made him more likely to succeed in college, so his confidence in taking on the college academic rigors was high.

College affordability is also a salient topic in conversations among students, with students having varying levels of concern. For students with no prior experience in the higher education system and who may not be familiar with applying for scholarships, how financial aid works, how much money it truly costs to go to college, and how much financial aid they are eligible for, college affordability is a source of major concern. During our first interview, Carolina Ramírez shared her concerns about being able to pay for college, and what she says specifically highlights as her unfamiliarity with requisites for scholarships as she worries about paying for school. She said,

I'm a little bit worried about that. My mom, she was telling me to apply to scholarships, apply to scholarships. Some of them, they're a little bit harder to do than others, like some of them they are asking you to become a great leader in your community and stuff

like that, but I'm just like a shy little person. How am I going to convince the community?

During our first interview, Nicolas Padilla also shared his concern for paying for college while inadvertently revealing that he is unfamiliar with the FAFSA process and its role in the financial aid process. Nicolas said,

It seems like it's not a major concern because I know there are scholarships. I know there's FAFSA, I know there's different stuff right? But it seems like not everybody gets that and I know not everybody gets that. That's why I'm scared because I know not everybody gets it. I can't be thinking I'm going to get it. We don't have money, so yeah, that's a big concern.

Nicolas' particular concern about paying for college and not knowing whether he would qualify for federal, state, or other aid further revealed that he was unaware that his family's financial status would likely result in strong financial aid. Mr. and Mrs. Padilla both sold tamales from grocery store parking lots, which was their only source of income. The Padilla family struggled with finding financial stability, and although the likelihood of receiving federal and state financial aid was high and Nicolas was a top student, Nicolas still felt worried about his ability to pay for college.

Sofía Carrillo and her family also struggled to find financial stability. Mrs. Padilla only worked a few days a week cleaning houses, while Mr. Padilla had recently become unemployed after working as a day laborer for several decades. Soon after meeting the college application deadlines, the family's financial situation led Sofía to consider staying at the local community college. Although we would later find out that she would not have a "choice" in going to a four-year institution because she was not accepted, it is particularly interesting that without knowing

that information she still considered foregoing the four-year institution in favor of staying at the local community college in order to not cause financial stress on herself or her family. Sofía wrestled with financial concerns throughout the entire data collection period, and during our first interview she shared,

Because my parents aren't working so it would be tough for them to rent me an apartment or for me, because they still have to pay the school and they're going to eventually... I know they're going to help me out financially but it's going to be hard on them, and it's going to be hard on me too because I'm going to be a full-time student and I've never had a job before. So, I'm going to be pretty stressed out being a full-time student and having a job.

A couple months after the initial interview when Sofía revealed her parents' financial situation and her concerns in paying for college, she shared her thoughts on whether she knew the exact cost of college. To this Sofía said, "A year, maybe it'll be about 12 grand. I'm not so sure because I thought about it but I haven't looked at it for the same reason that I don't want to bring my hopes down of knowing how expensive it is." Sofía carried such big concern about the inability to pay for college that she purposely avoided learning that information in fear that it would deter her in pursuing attendance at a four-year institution.

In contrast, students like Michael Cuellar and Chris Mejía, whose parents are financially stable, had the knowledge and foresight to financially plan for college, and who have developed networks afforded to them by their own college trajectories, worry a bit less about paying for college. During our second interview Michael Cuellar shared, "I'll probably get a car if I stay in state, so it just keeps adding up so it's a lot, a lot of money. That's all I know. [I'm not concerned]. My parents are very well stable financially." Michael further shared,



Financially, my parents, I know they can handle it, but I'm also applying for scholarships. I've only applied for a couple so far, I didn't really get on it, but I'm going to apply for a lot of local scholarships. My parents just did their taxes, so we had to get my FAFSA done, because, well, it's been done, but, like, the new form or something like that. So I can get that money. And then of course, grants. My parents don't want me to get student loans. That's a last resort, kind of, 'cause you know, those aren't too good in the future.

Once he had received admission into the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Michael revealed that he maintained hope that he could find an on-campus job given that his father had a connection with a high-ranking administrator at the university he hoped to attend. Michael shared,

I might actually work out there. Like I said [we know] Dr. Ruvalcaba, and if things go good, when we go out there, we're going to try and meet with him. If we do meet with him, hopefully he can give me an on-campus job or something, which will be cool because I think I'd be more involved. So that would help. That might help in the long run. I don't want my parents to be too overwhelmed with everything.

Michael saw working on campus as a way to take off pressure from his parents' responsibility in paying for college. Even from the first interview with Michael, he felt that any financial concerns would be met with a solution because his family was comfortably middle class and were financially stable. Michael shared,

I know we're pretty well off and we have enough money to go for a whole four years or like a good college and stuff. Maybe if I have to, get a loan or something in case I stay another year for a major or something, just depending but we're pretty well off. I could go to school all four years; my parents have told me they have money saved up and not a lot of people can do that. It's just that it's really expensive and stuff. There's always more

expenses, like additional add-ons and stuff like that, like food and other things. I think that's kind of where the expenses come in and that's pretty much just like a tiny worry, but I know we can do it and pay for it, and whatever means necessary, we'll just have to get loans and stuff even though that's not always what people want but you just got to do it.

One of the biggest concerns shared by all students was that of being admitted to the colleges of their choice - or any college, for that matter - and whether that college would be right for them. These concerns carried through starting from the personal statements all the way to enrollment. Nicolas Padilla experienced a lot of personal distress in the months leading to the application period, including his house burning down in an accidental fire, falling behind in school due to losing his home, and the passing of his grandfather. Nicolas was very concerned for how colleges may view the sharp decline of his grades, and did not appear to understand that the personal statement included in the application was designed for instances such as these.

During his first interview Nicolas shared,

I hadn't seen my grandpa for so many years and then he dies and I see my dad crying, like the man of the house. It's like we traveled over there, he's dead, you can't bring him back, and I have school and I...That's in my transcript. It's not just that, it's so many things. It's so hard to explain. It's not the house, it's not the grandpa; it's everything. That's my concern. [crying] I haven't cried in so many years.

Sofía Carrillo also shared feeling overwhelmed by the application process she had just gone through.

I think about it, but I don't think about it too much, because I don't want to feel so stressed out about it. I mean, I have my fingers crossed for San Bernardino, but if I don't

get in, there isn't really much I can do about it, and I just have to settle down. It's kind of disappointing, but it's better than not doing anything at all.

Sofía's trajectory was an interesting one. Although we would come to find out that she would not be admitted to any of the CSU system schools due to her receiving a D in one of her A-G requirements (and despite getting perfect grades thereafter), Sofía struggled with deciding what higher education route was right for her. She aimed at attending a four-year institution after high school graduation, but did not know if she would be able to afford it, all while making sense of the stigma associated with attending the local community college. While she waited to receive admissions notifications Sofía shared,

I don't want to go to COD. I'm hoping that if I can change to a different community college. I don't want to stay at COD. I'm having to settle for COD, and the worst would be having to settle for a certain class at COD. That would suck. It would. I think I deserve better than COD. I've worked really hard, and I know I can do it. But I don't know if you've ever had those times where you know you can do something, but there's this crowd of people, they try to push you with that crowd of people and you feel like they're holding you down from doing something? That's how I feel if I go to COD. I feel like I'm not going to get very far while I'm at COD. I need to push myself to something that's higher so I can push myself to be able to do something better. That's the way I see it. I don't want to go to COD. I feel like that would be holding me down from doing something greater with what I want to do.

Sofía would later come to see the local community college as a suitable alternative to attending a four-year institution, but it took the rejection of the CSU to see that. Her application from CSU

San Bernardino had been denied due to her receiving a D on one of her A-G courses. Although disappointed, Sofía was determined to keep her dream of going to college alive. Sofía shared,

I can't just say, 'Well, I didn't get in, so I'm not going to go to school.' And I have to go to school, even though COD was not an option for me. When I told [my mom] it was upsetting. It was disappointing. But like I said, there wasn't much any of us could do about it.

She further explained how it was that she went from getting low grades to fully believing she would be eligible for college,

My junior year was when I started, 'I need to do better.' And my senior year was like, 'I really need to get this.' And then when I found out I couldn't get in, I was like, 'Dang.' I know I could have changed the way I thought about it, but I didn't. And I think that happens a lot with freshmen and sophomores. They don't really care. They think they can change it their junior and senior year, but it's so hard. Because at that time, it's like, you're no longer a sophomore, you're a junior, you're at a higher level, you have more assignments. You're putting assignments from years past on top of that, so it's just more overwhelming. Because I made up two or three classes my senior year. But I didn't—I never thought about my chemistry class. But then it turned out it wasn't OK. I really do wish I could have changed the mentality I had.

For Sofía, not fully understanding the minimum requirements for admission, led her to feel disappointed and let down. Her parents, neither having gotten past an elementary-level education in their native Mexico nor receiving detailed information on the A-G requirements from Sofía's high school, did not have the information necessary for the foresight needed in this matter.

Overall, not having the necessary CGP information caused Sofía a multitude of emotions that

could have been prevented had she known early on that a D in an A-G courses would not help her meet the minimum requirements for admission into a California public four-year institution.

In a very similar fashion, Luciano González was not aware of the requirements of college admission, nor did he fully understand the CGP. In discussing the reason why he missed writing the personal statement for his UC system application, he said,

I didn't know it was mandatory. I just heard some kids were going just for, like, the fun, just getting a feel for his class. I was going to lunch. I was like, 'OK, people are going to his class just to get a feel for it, I'll go get lunch.' [laughs] I don't know. And I found out on the first day of school, so I was like, 'Okay, I missed an assignment.'

In Luciano's case, he grew to be overwhelmed and disappointed by the fact that he continued to miss deadlines and be misinformed about the CGP. During our last interview, as he reflected on his college-going dreams Luciano said,

Yes, I want to, because I know I want to, and I know I want to do it for, like, my family and stuff, and so I won't be at home just doing nothing. And the reason is because I don't want to feel like I'm hopeless, it just doesn't seem like me if I just didn't go, because the fact that I found out things too late, I don't want to seem like, 'Oh, it's too late, there's no point.' There's just reasons to say yes rather than no.

He missed the deadlines to apply to four-year institutions, and by luck applied to New Mexico Highlands because a campus recruiter went when to his high school and asked students to apply on the spot, free of charge. Luciano was admitted to New Mexico Highlands, but kept up-to-date with the information sent by the college due to his friends also being admitted and keeping him informed. However, Luciano still struggled with properly completing his FAFSA application, which came to be an issue on the day he joined his friends in visiting the New Mexico Highlands

campus - an eight-hour drive from home. Reflecting on the day he made the campus visit, Luciano described,

Like, the area was pretty far. My mom had told me she wasn't sure if we could afford the dormitories, and I was like, 'Well, okay, then that's understandable.' And I came into a problem. I don't think I even told my mom this yet, 'cause I think I forgot, but when I did tell them my information about my FAFSA, and I remember filling it out and everything, they said that there was, like, an error or something and that I had to do it over again, and I couldn't do it over there because they thought that I lived in the area, but I lived out of the area, and I couldn't do it. I told them, 'Oh, I can't do it again here,' because they said, like, the computers weren't accessible, so I was like, 'Oh, that puts me in a bind, because they won't let me use the computers.' They said I had to change something in order to make it for that school. And I was like, 'I'm unable to do it.' And they said something about doing it later, but I was even more anxious, because I was like, 'Oh, my gosh, I can't get this done.' It's all like one big process, and it's like a list you've got to check off. And then that happened and it threw me off. I actually did manage to get out of there in one piece without totally passing out of anxiety.

Luciano's mother, who had gone to a four-year institution decades prior but dropped out due to personal circumstances, did not have the information necessary to guide her son, and Luciano also was not part of an outreach program in which he would have learned this information.

In contrast, for Michael Cuellar and Chris Mejía, their parents' knowledge combined with their socioeconomic status and financial stability created an environment in which their concerns around college admission centered on fit rather than the "what ifs" of being admitted. For

Michael, his immediate concern was whether he would like CSU Long Beach, and felt that a campus visit soon after college applications were due might help him decide. He shared,

I don't know, it just seems like a great place to study and do work because it's not like San Marcos. If I go to San Marcos, I think I'd be a little distracted by the location because it's a beautiful place. There's a beach and everything. And L.A., yeah, things are there but there's nothing that's really too distracting I think. On top of that, I don't know. It's just like I don't know. I'm confused a little bit right now. Then maybe if I visit it, you know, maybe if I don't get a good vibe when I actually visit it, I might reconsider another college so I think after I visit the college, I'll really get a full idea.

Once college admissions notification arrived, and Michael found out that he had been accepted to University of Hawai'i at Manoa, he decided to go there. This decision was made largely in part because of the location, his parents ability to finance his education, and because of Dr. Ruvalcaba, the family friend who was a top administrator in the island. Promptly, he and his parents planned a trip to Hawai'i to get Michael acquainted with the university. On this, Michael shared,

I love everything about [Hawai'i]. It's just amazing. The people are great and everything. And then after we visit, May 1st—well, May 1st is for the what-do-you-call it? The intent. And then I get my room and board done, and then I'll take an EPT test, something like that. I think it's just for English. I'll call later. And class starts the 20th of August.

Having the ability to finance trips to visit such a distant campus takes away the burden from the student to decide on a university without having seen it.

For Chris, the anxiety he felt during the CGP focused on the college he would ultimately select, and to this point he said,

I think with the anxiety I felt like I didn't think picking a college was going to be this kind of stressful. I kind of felt like, 'Oh it'll be pretty easy, I'll just get accepted and stuff and just figure it out from there,' but I didn't realize how kind of stressful it would be just deciding where you're going to end up. You have to decide now where you want to end up later, so it's kind of funny.

What Chris brought up next also highlights the impact of being able to make a campus visit has on the comfort level they feel in the selection process of the college they will go to:

I think location has a big thing to do with it, I think, just, like, the whole area and environment, I think. Also that, like, the other two schools, San Marcos and Cal Poly, I haven't checked those out. But Dominguez Hills I visited, and San Francisco, I've been there multiple times, to the campus and stuff.

Parents also experience worries and concerns regarding college and the CGP, but there is a distinguishable difference in how they confront these emotions. For parents who have zero to little experience in the U.S. higher education system, or how know very little about it, their CGP is filled with anxieties that plague them throughout the process. Their college-experienced counterparts, however, have strategies in place to confront their concerns and worries, which can be attributed to their own experience and knowledge about the CGP and overall college experience. The stories of the following families will illustrate.

In the case of Mrs. Padilla, not knowing what college is like led her to not be able to envision the experience her son, Nicolas, would have. When asked if she had any concerns during our second interview, Mrs. Padilla said,



*Yo nomás un poquito de miedo que se vaya y no se que pueda pasar. No es la misma que ellos estén con uno a que ellos estén solos. Pues sí, claro que yo también confío en él, pero una cosa es que este todo el tiempo con uno a que se vayan y estén solos.*

I have a bit of fear that he will leave and that something would happen to him. It is not the same to be here with us as opposed to alone. And well, yes, of course I trust him, but one thing is for him to be here with us and another for him to be away.

Similarly, Mrs. Ochoa shared concerns about her daughter, Melina, getting sick, even though there are on-campus clinics and treatment centers. During our first interview Mrs. Ochoa shared, “That’s my main concern, that I want her close enough that if I talk to her on the phone or we Skype and she looks like something’s not okay, that I can get in the car and go over there and check out what’s wrong with my baby.”

Parents also experience confusion and disappointment on class schedules. These feelings can be based on their experience of K-12 and belief that college schedules work similarly. This was particularly the case with Mr. and Mrs. Mendoza as they got accustomed to their son attending COD. As Mr. Mendoza pointed out, her son, Jose, had classes on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, as well as on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

*Y lo que yo no entiendo, porque no dan clases normal para que los niños acaben más pronto. Osea, una hora? Más tarde en llegar cuando ya saliste. En la universidad si les dan horario completo?*

What I don’t understand is, why don’t they provide a normal schedule of classes so the kids can finish much quicker? I mean, one hour? You take longer getting there than the time you spend in class. Do they give a full-day schedule at the university level?

Jose had opted to study at COD, the local community college, instead of accepting the admissions offer from Cal Poly Pomona, and so Mr. Mendoza remained confused on how it would be possible for Jose to finish his coursework at COD quickly if he was not taking class all day long.

Parents are also confused about the CGP. Specifically, regarding the steps to take if they haven't heard from college admissions, how they can know the amount of financial aid they will receive, how to access that information, who to talk to, what the deadlines are and whether they have to submit a deposit without knowing the full extent of their financial aid. There is a lot of confusion that is primarily a repercussion of not knowing the CGP, and therefore reinforcing the idea that knowledge - or the lack thereof - can lead to increased concerns and anxieties.

Mrs. Ramírez shared her frustration with not being able to contact someone who could help her understand the amount of financial aid she and her daughter, Carolina, would receive. Mrs. Ramírez said,

*...Financical aid, aja. E dejado recados también en East Bay y hasta la fecha no me han contestado. Solamente ahorita como te comente, estoy ocupada en el trabajo y trato de hablar pero en veces no tengo tiempo de quedarme en "hold." Déjo mensaje y en veces le digo 'estoy hablando del teléfono de mi trabajo, por favor nada mas pregunten por mi, no hay ningún problema en eso,' pero te digo que siempre esta la maquina. Ahí es donde me siento perdida, ósea porque no se como le vamos hacer. Ahorita lo que sé es que por ejemplo East Bay sin grants y financial, te sale como a 22 o 23 mil.*

...Financical aid, yes. I have left voicemails with East Bay and to this day they have not returned my call. Just like I mentioned, I am busy at work and I try to call then but I don't have time to stay "on hold." I leave voicemails and tell them, "I am calling from work,

and when you return the call just ask for me, that's not a problem," but that damn [message] machine. That's when I feel lost because I don't know what we are going to do. All I know at the moment is that in the case of East Bay, without grants and financial aid, it costs about 22 or 23 thousand.

The confusion on how financial aid works is shared by Mr. and Mrs. Hernández. In their case, feeling left in the dark by the CGP adds to the stress surrounding their perceived and actual ability to pay for their son's college, which would affect their decisions regarding post-secondary education. As the family waited to hear from admissions, Mrs. Hernández said,

*No se si lo aceptan como en Fullerton o Northridge, no se. Tenemos que esperar hasta que ellos nos manden como nos van ayudar, verdad? Pero yo no entiendo como es si dicen que tiene que mandar la carta de que se va a comprometer aquí a [CSU] Los Ángeles, pero ... por ejemplo, si también lo quieren en [CSU] Fullerton, lo aceptan en Fullerton, pero si en Fullerton nos ayudan más que en Los Ángeles, so no se si al mismo tiempo tenga que hacer los dos o no se como sea la cosa ahí.*

I don't know if Fullerton or Northridge will accept him. We have to wait until they tell us how much they can help us with, right? What I don't understand is that if they ask you to send your letter of intent here to [CSU] Los Angeles, but ... for instance, if they also admit him at [CSU] Fullerton, but if Fullerton helps us more than Los Angeles, I don't know if you have to do both at a time or how it works.

In a similar case of feeling lost and not knowing what college will truly cost them, Mr. and Mrs. Hernández shared the lack of communication from several universities in relaying that information in time for the Intent to Register deadline. Mrs. Hernández shared,

*Es un problema porque si a él no le han dicho ni sí y si no en otras dos o tres escuelas, ya nomás falta una semana y media. No va haber tiempo para recibir todo. Al menos ya que esta semana agarramos algo, pero si no sabemos de Northridge, si no sabemos de Fullerton, no sabemos, y si ya nos queda una semana y media, que vamos hacer? Ósea y nosotros no sabemos, ósea, ahora al último le estoy diciendo que ya mandaron las ofertas pero nosotros no sabemos y él no sabe tampoco, so no vamos a estar esperando.*

It is a problem because they haven't told him anything in any of the two or three schools, and we have a week and a half left, so what are we going to do? We don't know, and if they've already sent the admissions notifications, but we still don't know, so we aren't going to stay waiting.

Due to being put on a wait list, the Hernández family had to wait an inordinate amount of time to hear whether Ricardo would be accepted anywhere. Not knowing exactly what action to take during this time, and being left in limbo, left them full of anxiety. When asked how she was feeling, Mrs. Hernández shared,

*Muchas ansiedades, verdad, porque no sabe bien exactamente a donde ir. Quiere ir a Fullerton, pero no. Ya le dijeron que estaba en espera.*

Lots of anxiety because we don't know exactly where he will go. He wants to go to Fullerton, but no. They told him he was in the waitlist.

Perhaps the most heartbreaking story told by a parent came from Mrs. Carrillo, who explained how she felt when she learned that her daughter, Sofía, was denied admission to CSU San Bernardino, her last remaining hope in going straight to a four-year institution after high school. Mrs. Carrillo expressed her desire to keep supporting her daughter and pushing her to keep fighting for a spot, but Sofía felt defeated and resigned herself to attending COD. Mrs. Carrillo

began by describing the time period when they had not yet heard from CSU San Bernardino, and said,

*Si me da mucho aguete porque yo le digo que se puede hacer, que si yo puedo ir a la escuela hablar con alguien que nos pueda o que la pueda ayudar y ella me dijo que no. Que no hay nada que hacer. No se si sea cierto o ella ya no quiere. Dice que no, que ella mejor se va a esperar haber que le resuelven y para continuar y haber que es lo que va a pasar. Que alo mejor se va a ir al colegio si no le responden acá. Le digo pero qué otra cosa que hay que hacer porque ella es la que dice que no, que no quiere que vaya yo a la escuela a preguntar.*

It really bums me out because I ask her if there's anything we can do, if I can go to the school to talk to someone who can help us, but she says no. She says there's nothing left to do. I don't know if that's true or if she doesn't want to keep fighting. She says no, that instead she'll wait to see what happens. That maybe she'll go to the local community college if they don't give her an answer. But I keep asking if there's anything we can do, but she keeps saying no, that she doesn't want me to go to the school to ask what's going on.

The frustration and sadness felt by Mrs. Carrillo as she saw her daughter struggle to make sense of what was happening with the admissions notification is easy to see. Mrs. Carrillo later explained how incapable she felt of helping her daughter and did not know how to help her feel better.

For the Mejía and Cuellar families, the ways in which they countered their anxieties came from their familiarity and experience with the U.S. higher education system. In regards to financial concerns, these parents were familiar enough with financial aid options, the college

payment structure, and other strategies to make paying for college manageable. In the Mejía family, Mr. Mejía had received an A.A. and together with Mrs. Mejía, had successfully sent their eldest child to college. The experience with sending their daughter prepared them to take on the challenge of sending Chris to college. From early in our conversations, Mr. and Mrs. Mejía reiterated their preparedness and outlined the plan they had set in place to send Chris to college. When asked about worries or concerns in regards to paying for school, Mr. Mejía said, “Not at all. No, we’ve already gone through it with our daughter and we’re experts. We know what to expect, yeah. And we have a dedicated income stream dedicated to that.” Being middle class and with some experience with college has afforded them the knowledge to plan ahead and be prepared enough to face challenges brought on by the CGP. Mr. Mejía also shared,

No, those are just things that we think about like ‘Okay, this is what we got to plan, this is what we got to put into place, we need to do this, we’re going to go this way,’ and stuff like that. I call them mechanics. Part of the mechanics, logistics, trying to, ‘What are you going to need, what do we need to do this, what do we need to do that.’ There’s really no fear. Financially, we’re good, we’re set. The plan’s in place. There’s a steady monthly income for that. The only concern would be if he aspires and is accepted to a higher college, I would not want to deny him that. That would be the only fear. Then the other fear is once he gets there, that he gets too involved and doesn’t do the work because of his inattention or his distractions. Those are my only fears.

Fears can also be put to ease when using connections that have been gained through a past higher education experience, as was the case with the Cuellar family. Their fears of their child being homesick are countered by the fact that they know a highly-ranked administrator at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa who can attend to their child if something goes terribly

wrong or he needs support. Parents without those connections don't have that to fall back on if they fear about their child's safety while away at college. Mr. Cuellar highlighted this point when he said,

I'm not concerned. I know [Michael] is not coming home. And I think he—he'll come home in the summer. But he may end up living there. That's not a concern of mine. I don't foresee him saying, "I'm defeated, I'm coming home." I think once he graduates and decides what he wants to do, yeah, he'll come home or whatever. But he'll come to California. But then again, I don't know. A lot can happen. You change in those four years or however long, we're planning on four years, but you never know. I'm not concerned of him coming home or being defeated. He's pretty much set in his ways. He's a lot like me in that, when we say we're going to do something. It's going to be hard, and yeah, he's going to get homesick, and he misses us and he misses—well, the friends that are here, because all his friends are gone. But I don't foresee him coming home, not from college. I'm just glad we had the connection with Dr. Ruvalcaba over there. I think that will be helpful too.

For the Cuellars, and especially Mr. Cuellar, knowing what college is like, what the lifestyle is like, and knowing people he can contact in case of an emergency alleviated any concern he may have had about sending his son to college. He explained,

And I felt comfortable leaving my son with people who go up to you and talk to you, 'What can we help you with?' Not just in the program, just walking campus itself. Very willing to help, to let you know, 'How can I do this? How can I direct you?' And as a parent, especially being the first, and then me, I'm so close to my son, of course I would love him to be here, but he's where he's supposed to be, and I feel comfortable, and he's

in a safe environment. And that's I think number one priority, that I know he's safe among people that [are] going to obviously help him, not only in education, but to feel that he is safe. I guess that's the best word to describe it.

On Mrs. Cuellar part, she explained that although she went to college and earned a B.A., the CGP has changed in a way that felt new to her. Nonetheless, she still has knowledge of the components needed to be successful in transitioning to college, such as meeting with advisors and understanding payment plans, among other things. Mrs. Cuellar said,

I think we're seeing it through new eyes, to be totally honest. When I went, I didn't live on campus, I lived with my family, and it was a different experience, even though I went to a small college. I got the same kind of sense that he has there of the family environment, I get that. But it's all different when it's your kid doing it. It's like, my parents never went to—unless for graduation or a specific dinner. I mean, my uncles did, but my parents didn't understand the whole concept of admissions. So my uncles would have to take me, the one that wasn't working. So my mom and dad, culturally, they never understood it. They were like, 'Okay, we'll help you pay for books,' but they didn't understand—I was doing it on my own. I didn't have any help or any reference, 'cause no one at that point had graduated from college in my family, all my family. So who could I go to to say, 'How do I do this?' So I learned everything on my own, I didn't have anybody. Now with Luis having us, I'm saying with your books, now you can rent books, you can't eBook, you can't buy them on Amazon. We had to go to the university bookstore, buy them new, because the freshmen were the last ones to get in, it went by seniority. It was different than how it is now.



And being that it's our son, I think we're more perceptive now because it's our son and we're older. I was 18, and I don't think when you first start, you don't even know what you're doing. It hasn't even sunk in. And I think with Luis now, he's living for the moment and enjoying it, which is awesome and great, but we're seeing it as, 'Okay, have you met with your advisor? Are you eating? How's your dorm room? How's your roommate?' We're paying tuition and all this other stuff, so we're more invested in that logistics and, 'Okay, what got paid?' When I took that first payment, I was like, 'Oh, my God!' My heart got me, because it is a lot of money, but it's an investment in your child, and of course we would do it a million times.

Mr. Cuellar echoed that sentiment, and shared,

He needs to understand that he can't do it all by himself. See, he's done this all by himself through high school; he's never asked me for help, we were talking about this. So my biggest work after we get in college, you got to get study groups because that's how you get through it because there's always someone much smarter who can help you out in these classes for him to excel. That's something that we need to have a conversation with him. I just don't want him to come back, like, stay away buddy. I tried to do it by myself and I can see Luis trying to do it by himself and it gets very difficult.

Although Michael Cuellar is a second-generation college student, Mr. and Mrs. Cuellar still have fears about sending Michael to college, but those fears are met with plans for solutions, such as countering homesickness with an on-campus mentor. Parental fear will always be there, but how those fears are approached depend on the CGP knowledge held.

### **College-Going: An Emotional Rollercoaster**

The second theme highlights the emotional roller coaster felt by families. Familiarity and knowledge of the U.S. higher education system and the CGP elicits what is described as by students and parents as an emotional rollercoaster - and one that has more extreme ups and downs if the families hold little to no knowledge of the higher education system or if they are confused by the CGP.

When students were asked to describe the CGP in a word, some described it as a stressful, frustrating period, with some students calling it “disappointing.” Others, who happened to be those students whose families had experience with the U.S. higher education system, also described it as an overall positive experience but particularly stressful when it came to deciding which college to attend. Luisa Marín, whose parents were born in Mexico and had a high school-level education, would be a first-generation college student and would eventually attend UCLA. After the CGP had concluded for her, Luisa described her CGP in the following way:

And then when the whole process actually came about and started, it was difficult at times, but luckily at school, you get the help you need. And my parents, whenever they could, they would try and help and understand, filling out applications, tax information stuff and whatnot. Even when you had two days to do it and you’re stressing out because you don’t know about the deadlines. I feel like there’s this period in time where there’s so much worry and a lot of it’s trying to figure it out and doing it right. And everything’s new, and you’re worrying and worrying, and then once you actually find out where you’re going, then there’s a sense of relief, a sense of excitement. And once you’re actually here, you’re proud of yourself, and your parents feel proud of you. I guess you can only go on from here, taking everything that you’ve gone through and making the best of it.

The process Luisa describes is one with an array of opposing emotions: stress, worry, excitement, and pride. Her description also highlights how having little information on the CGP adds to the stress levels of the process. For Melina Ochoa, the CGP was similar to that of Luisa's. Melina shared,

I think I learned that things could get pretty hectic, that things could change very fast, and at times you don't know what you're going to do, but then in the end you do. Everything turns out OK—well, not everything turns out OK, but you get to relax and calm down after all those crazy things are happening.

Nicolas also shared,

Oh, my God, that's hard! This process has been complicated yet it's what it has to be. It's the real truth of what we weren't expecting, like the events that I gave you, for example, are things that weren't in the plan.

Students also described the CGP as frustrating, and again, students cited that the lack of knowing the correct information regarding the CGP added to the process feeling stressful. These feelings seemed to intensify for students who did not fulfill their goal of enrolling in a four-year institution. In the case of Sofía Carrillo, despite applying to several CSUs, her only option became the COD, which she did not take favorably. For example, Sofía shared,

Frustrating. Very frustrating. And in a way stressful and disappointing. I think it was just frustrating the fact that I wouldn't hear back from the schools on time and then I would call and they wouldn't respond to me and then when they would finally respond to me way past the date, it was to tell me that I didn't get in. That was disappointing and frustrating. In a way it brought stress, because I felt like I'm not going to get into anywhere and I'm going to be stuck to COD. But I know I can push myself through

COD, but I just wish I didn't have to think that way. I wish I could have just gone straight into a university.

Luciano also described the CGP as a process filled with varying emotions. Luciano described it by saying,

Oh, gosh. The whole process was very different. It gave me different outlooks on a lot of different things. Like, I was trying to be more independent. It was a lot of emotions. I was happy, I was anxious. I didn't have a feeling of hopelessness, but I didn't want to think that all hope was lost, which is the reason why I'm still trying now, and still summing it up, it was very crazy, just—like, the interviews, when I think back at it, a lot of changes happening during the year, how they were saying in college majors change, ideas change, and it's just—that's just how it is sometimes. All these interviews, when I look back at them, it just further proves, when people tell me how things will change, it just proves their point. And I've seen how things really do take a turn.

Although many of the students felt frustrated by the CGP, other students saw it as a positive experience where the concerns focused more on selecting the right fit as opposed to worries on whether college would even be an option. Chris Mejía shared his understanding of the CGP early in the interviews and said he did not realize how stressful the CGP would be, especially when it came to deciding on a college to attend. A few months later, once Chris started attending San Francisco State, he shared his perspective of the CGP:

It's a great experience, I would say. If there's future kids looking into college who are indecisive or whether or not they should go, if they should just stay home or find a job or something, I would honestly really encourage going to college. It's a great experience, just being able to be independent and then also just being able to do things school-wise

that you couldn't do in high school. There's so much more options. You can go to class at night. You can work around a working schedule. It's all to just better yourself and better your education. I don't see why someone, if they have the ability to do it, or they have the money to do it, or say if they get FAFSA money, I don't see why they wouldn't do it, because honestly, so far it's been a great experience, just the almost month I've been here it's been really good. It's going to be hard, but honestly, you have to push yourself. Life isn't easy. You just have to roll with the punches and go through it.

Michael Cuellar also shared his perspectives on the CGP:

I've met [a] bunch of people I never would have seen before. I probably would have been with all freshmen, which, I don't like freshmen at all, I don't consider myself a freshman because I don't hang out with freshmen. But other than that, it's really cool. I'm glad I chose here. I'm glad I ended up here. This is way better than what I expected. I think I'm in awe about that. [pause] And my parents gave me a reality check, because they're like, go college, all that time. And to finally get in...for me it was amazing.

Despite the CGP long being theorized and written about as an individual process, parents also find themselves experiencing an array of emotions as their child transitions into college - and more often than not, as they themselves learn of this process and transition to being a college-student parent. Just as it was for the students who were unfamiliar with the CGP, parents who are not aware of resources available or have no prior experience with U.S higher education also feel frustration, lost, and stressed. However, one parent with this background called it an "adventure," signaling the venturing into the new college world.

In the case of Mrs. González, despite her experience in entering a four-year institution decades prior, she felt lost when attempting to guide her son as he transitioned into college. She reflected on the CGP, and Mrs. González shared,

I wish I would have been more aware of when classes and things are going to start. I wish I would have known more so that I could help him. I wish I would have gone through these things so that I could walk him through it. I wish he had somebody that has done it, that has gone to college, that can walk him through it or tell him, “You know what? Do this or this,” and guide him along the way. But I don’t know who would actually just do that, you know? ‘Cause you go and ask questions, but then it’s kind of like, “Next.”

There’s nobody that actually will take the time that knows.

Mrs. Hernández also described her experience, particularly focusing on the stress felt throughout the CGP. Mrs. Hernández shared,

*Para mi fue un proceso importante porque yo no sé nada. Yo no me fui a la universidad. Yo mire que se batalla mucho. Yo como mama hasta ahorita me estoy dando cuenta, pero de esa forma yo le he dado mucho apoyo a el. Le he hablado y le he dicho “Sabes qué mijo, has esto, has lo otro.” Fue un proceso que si me puso nerviosa. Soy muy nerviosa, mucha presión, de pensar y dije si vamos a poder ayudarle, si vamos a poder pagar. Si me entiendes? Fue un proceso de tensión, pero el proceso es de que lo ayudemos a que el pueda seguir estudiando. Eso es lo que a mi me pareció que hicimos bien.*

For me, it was an important process because I don’t know much. I didn’t go to college. So I saw that it was a strenuous process. As a mother, I am just coming to understand that, but I also know I gave him a lot of support. I spoke to him and would tell him, “You know, son, do this, do that.” It was a process that made me nervous. Yes, very nervous

lots of stress, in just wondering if we'd be able to help him, if we'd be able to pay. Do you understand? It was a process full of tensions, but the process is also about helping him to keep studying. That's where I feel we did well.

Mr. Hernández also shared his perspective, saying,

*Yo le dije a los muchachos, "Nosotros como familia, ellos, no tienen choice. Tienen que ir a la universidad. No hay otra." Le puse esa en sus cabezas. Le dije nosotros venimos de México, en el lado de Mexicali. En Mexicali yo fui a la escuela. No termine la universidad pero estuve ahí un par de años y ahora tengo a mis hijos y ahora ellos tienen que ir. Yo les dije a ellos, "No hay choice." Les digo, "No hay para atrás." Ya teniendo eso en cabeza ya les dije que vamos hacer todo lo que tengamos que hacer. Fue duro, verdad, pero no fue fácil el proceso porque no sabemos. No sabíamos qué hacer. [...] El trabajo es de el muchacho. Tiene que hacerlo y es por eso que yo le doy carrilla a Ricardo para que se pusiera trucha para que le hechara ganas. Y fue difícil, pero a veces pienso que si fue un poquito duro darle mucha carrilla. Parece que le di mucha carrilla. A veces como estaba muy estresado, si lo miraba muy estresado, y yo me calmaba. Pero como le digo, ni modo. No hay otro camión para atrás. Le digo yo voy hacer todo lo que pueda para que el vaya a la escuela, para que tenga su oportunidad de ir a la escuela.*

I told my sons, "As a family, you, don't have a choice. You have to go to college. There is no alternative." I put that thought in their head. I told them that we came from Mexico, from the area in Mexicali. I went to school in Mexicali. I didn't finish college there but I did stay there a couple of years and now that I have my kids, they have to go too. I told them, "There is no choice." I tell them, "There is no other option." Having that in their head, I told them we'd do everything in our power to make it happen. It was difficult, and

the process wasn't easy because we didn't know about it. We didn't know what to do. [...] The burden is on the student. He has to be the one to do everything, so that's why I push Ricardo so that he'd give it his all. And it was difficult, and sometimes I feel I pushed him too hard. Sometimes he was so stressed, and I saw him very stressed, and I stopped myself. But just like I'm saying, "Oh well, there's no turning back." I told him I'd do everything in my power to get him to college, so that he'd have his opportunity to go to college.

Mrs. Martínez' case was a bit different because she was a bit more familiar with college-going. As a county employee, she had access to several resources, which included co-workers who had gone to four-year universities themselves, that allowed her to have a general understanding of the components of the CGP. In addition, she had attended the local community college and received an A.A. many years prior. Mrs. Martínez shared,

I didn't know how involved, how much they have to do to be able to have everything lined up perfectly so that you do go away. There's so many things that last senior year. That's what I tell my friends at work who have a senior. "You need to put your mind to that. If there's a deadline, they need to stay on top of it." Because I didn't even know. There were so many things that Jessica had to keep on top of that I just told her, "You've got to do this." There's a lot of things that have to work out. [...] A relief. Because I think that this is something that doesn't happen to a lot of kids around here. So I'm relieved she's one of the ones that is doing some of that. For me, it's like, finally, she's going.

Most parents spoke about the CGP as a stressful and frustrating process, however, Mr. and Mrs. Marín felt it was an adventure. Although neither of them had gone to college, they were involved in a college-going program that exposed them to the CGP peripherally. Nonetheless, it was



through this program that they were able to experience snippets of what college would be like, such as going with their daughter to visit a college in upstate New York. As I asked him to describe the CGP, It was this experience that stood out to Mr. Marín because it reminded him that sending his daughter to college was a great accomplishment. Mr. Marín shared,

*Es algo una aventura para uno mismo. No nomás para [nuestra hija], si no también para uno porque anda uno con ellas y ellas le dice a uno y se informan en ella. Digo, andas en lugares donde no sabia que íbamos a ir. En Nueva York que anduve allá con ella. Yo que iba a saber de Nueva York yo de ir allá y se siente uno más suave porque no andas de paseo. Fui en compañía a acompañar a mi hija y todo ya te das una idea como es en la universidades, como viven. Como ahora que fuimos acá a UCLA a conocerla antes también. Ni por la mente te pasan eso que estés en esos lugares.*

This is a bit of an adventure for us. Not just for [our daughter], but for us too because we are with her, she tells us things and we learn from her. I mean, you go to places you never imagine going. I went to New York with her. What the heck did I know about New York, and there I was, so it was an awesome feeling because you know you aren't there for vacation. I accompanied my daughter and you can only imagine what the college is like, how they live. We also went to UCLA to check it out. It just never crosses your mind that you'll be in places like those.

For parents who had a sense of what to expect in the CGP due to their own college experience and familiarity, their descriptions of the CGP were overall positive and did not reflect an arduous process like it was for first-generation students' parents. Mr. and Mrs. Cuellar were a perfect example of this. Mrs. Cuellar shared,

I would say bittersweet, because it's such an awesome thing as a parent to send your kid to college for him to have the skills and go and be accepted. As a parent, that's an awesome feat, not only that your child did it, but in some minute way you had something to do with that. But it's bitter because you have to let them go, so that's the phrase I would use for me. And just as a parent, just elated, because I know a lot of other parents, their kids can't even go to class on time, much less get accepted to a big college like that and then live away from home. I would say it's been a pleasure, a milestone, and bittersweet.

However, Mrs. Cuellar also complicated this perspective as she described that the CGP went smoothly for her son in part because they, as parents, took on a large responsibility of the CGP.

Mrs. Cuellar further explained her perspective, and said,

To add to that, I don't think Michael even realizes how lucky he had it. All this experience I think has been very positive and very good and he's having a great time, but I don't think he even knows as parents we went through the agonizing of going through all this, especially for me just emotionally, but also, 'Okay, Mom, here, send a check.' To him, he didn't think about, 'Dad has to work overtime.' It never occurred to him that we can't afford this, or we're going to do without groceries because this has to get paid. He never has thought of money that way, 'cause he's never had to. And [my husband's] professor at Berkeley is now [a top administrator at] Hawai'i. Coincidence had nothing to do with my son getting in.

Although the CGP was also a successful one for the Mejía family, they describe a process that required constant vigilance of their strategy to get Chris to college. During our last interview, a few weeks after Chris had left for college, Mr. Mejía explained,

If I can interject real quick, it was not easy, even though we had a game plan, because there's a constant pressure there. You can't slack off and say, 'I'm not going to say anything for three or four days. I'm going to doze off for a week.' There was constant pressure all the time. And there was arguing there when things didn't happen or if he fell asleep and didn't do his homework because he was so tired. 'Hey, what are you doing asleep? You've got homework to do.' 'Dad, I'm dead tired.' Sleep in his eyes. 'Leave him alone, let him sleep.' 'No, no, he can't sleep.' There was friction. It was tough, but we had a plan, and it feels good that it was accomplished and there was a sense of relief, not when he was first there, but I found a sense of relief this week. [...] And we were on the same page from the beginning, or even before the beginning, before the inception, and it worked, and we did it good as a couple. And that was a good feeling that we had a good accomplishment as a couple, that, wow, we did that.

Neither one of us were a surprised parent when our kids would say as a freshman or junior or senior, 'I'm going to look at that college, look at that college.' But I know there was some surprised parents out there that didn't know that their kids wanted to go to college until they were juniors and seniors. I would know people that said, 'Oh, hey, my boy wants to go to college!' I wouldn't say nothing. 'I didn't even know he wanted to go to college?' 'He's a junior or senior and you're just having this conversation?'

Despite their CGP requiring constant pressure and having to stay focused, the CGP experience of the Cuellar and Mejía families were not as filled with anxiety, frustration, and moments of despair as it was for the families who did not have familiarity with the U.S. higher education system and the CGP overall.

## **Conclusion**

The emotional journey of students and parents is an important component of the CGP. The happiness, frustration, and sense of accomplishment shared by the students and parents in this study reveal that they are motivated by the emotions they feel, as well as the fact that their emotions are reflections of how comfortable and familiar they are with the CGP. Furthermore, these findings point to and reinforce the argument that having an understanding of the CGP is incredibly crucial to a more successful CGP - this “success” being more than enrolling into a higher education institution, but recognizing the emotional impact of the process and wanting to ensure a healthier CGP for families, regardless of the parents’ personal experience with U.S. higher education.

## **Chapter 6: Expectations and Their Role in the College-Going Process**

One of the main purposes of this dissertation study was to increase our understanding of how Latina/o students and parents experience the CGP, and specifically, learn how their respective perspectives and expectations come into play as they experience the CGP. As I interviewed students and parents four times over the course of a year, it became clear that the expectations of each party played major roles in how they experienced the CGP. Although the influence of expectations may be expected, what became increasingly interesting was that these expectations at times changed, making the CGP an even more complex process than previously thought.

This chapter focuses on the expectations that students and parents hold as they journey through the CGP. Due to the high number of cases coded (over 1,400 times across 105 transcripts) for “expectations” and its subcodes “parent expectations of students,” “student expectations of themselves,” “perceived expectations parents have of students,” and “student expectations of parents,” the two most prominent themes will be discussed. The first theme focuses on expectations surrounding the purpose of going to college. These expectations covered beliefs such as going to college to achieve social mobility, as well as college perceived as a place where the student can grow and transition into adulthood. The second theme centers on the student and parents’ financial situation and sense of affordability. Student and parent perceptions about what is affordable and attainable given their economic situation shapes their thought-process and decision-making, which therefore can lead to them masking with discomfort any financial concerns with far-away distance of a student’s desired higher education institution. The perceptions around what is affordable and viable shapes student and parent expectations during the CGP. This finding is especially striking when considering the perspectives of families with

low financial means. Overall, this chapter will showcase the ways in which different expectations not only influence the individual's perspective of the CGP, but how the expectations of the family as a whole impacts their experience and journey.

### **Expectations on College-Going: The Purpose of College**

**College-going for a better life.** Students and parents shared a variety of expectations regarding college-going, one being that what is expected by going to college is for students to lead a better life and experience upward mobility. In the case of Luisa Marín, she believed that her parents expected her to go to college for the future possibility of earning a higher income. This perceived expectation - whether real or not - came at odds with her desire to study English or the Arts and major in Drama - choices that are not seen by her parents as lucrative enough. During our first interview I asked Luisa what she thought her parents expected of her, and she shared,

Just whatever that I do, I think they want me to make a lot of money. I think making a lot of money would be nice and stuff, but I think if being like I said, a drama teacher or an English teacher, if that's something that's really going to make me happy and stuff, I'd be okay with that. I think that would maybe make them upset until they really understand me. They'd just be like 'You had the potential to go to med school and make so much more money than you're making now, I don't see why you didn't.' That's what kind of scares me with going through the theatre route sometimes, you know?

In that same interview Luisa further described her understanding of why she felt her parents expected her to study a profitable career, to which Luisa said,

Just because with the whole economy issue right now and I've seen my parents kind of talking or I've walked in on my parents kind of downstairs, I guess they're talking about

something and I'd rather not hear it. But the next day they'll be like 'You know,' or sometimes come to me and my brother 'When you guys get older, you guys go to college and be successful, that way you don't have to struggle like we do sometimes or like we did.' I think that's where those expectations come from.

When discussing the conversations she had with her father, Luisa revealed that they were tense because she felt her father did not understand her. She also highlighted her effort in mitigating the financial strain on her family. Luisa shared,

My dad gets kind of mad sometimes like when I tell him I want to go away and he's like 'Well, I don't want to pay for you to go to school all the way over there, or I don't want to pay for you to go to school if you're going to study something dumb like English and drama,' you know. And then that gets me kind of sad because it's like, that's just what I want to do, that's what I want to be. I think that will make me happy; I wish you could just understand that there's more to it than that. My mom will tell me 'Try to fill out as many scholarships as you can because I want to help you and we'll do whatever we can for you to go to college, but anything that can help us is good right now.'

The economic situation in 2011 created an environment of uncertainty as many people lost jobs and business decreased. Luisa's father, Mr. Marín, was the owner of a struggling, small, fast-food restaurant, which provides context to Luisa's statements. In an effort to understand the expectations Luisa had explained, during the first interview I asked Mr. and Mrs. Marín about the expectations they had of Luisa. Mrs. Marín shared,

*Ella sabe que tiene que estudiar. Va a estudiar drama, pero a lo mejor lo agarra como un minor. Ella sabe que tiene que estudiar algo más. Ella quiere estudiar biología o de ingles, una de esas dos ella quiere agarrar y su drama. Le digo 'Mija, esta bien que*

*estudies drama y todo lo que quieras, y si esa va hacer tu vida, esta bien, pero tiene que estudiar algo más.'*

She knows she has to study. She will study Drama, but maybe take it as a minor. She knows she must study something else. She has said she wants to pursue biology or English, so she'll major in either of the two and Drama. I've told her, 'Honey, it is fine with me if you study Drama, and you want that to be part of your life, but you have to study something else.'

Mr. Marín, however, shared his general expectations of Luisa, explaining,

*Lo que esperamos de ella es que termine lo que pone sus metas, que se ha propuesto hacer ella. Por nosotros, lo que podemos hacer es estar ahí, apoyandola. Esperamos que ella logre todas sus metas, o lo que se propone.*

We hope that she accomplishes her goals, whatever goals she has set for herself. On our end, all we can do is to be there, to support her. We hope that she accomplishes her goals, whatever it is she is aiming for.

Mrs. Marín echoed her husband's sentiment, adding,

*Ella tiene muchas ideas en la cabeza. No sabe que va a terminar haciendo pero lo que termine, yo se que le va a ir bien. Ella dice 'esto quiero,' y lo termina. Que va hacer? No sabemos qué va hacer, pero algo va a terminar, si.*

She has a lot of ideas. We don't know what she will end up doing, but whatever she decides on, I know she will do well. She says, 'This is what I want,' and she accomplishes it. What will she do? We don't know what she'll do, but she will accomplish it.

They expected Luisa to graduate with a college degree, and felt confident that she would



accomplish whatever career she decided to pursue. However, it is clear that at the beginning of this study, when Luisa was starting her senior year of high school, her perceptions of what her parents expected of her were different from what her parents shared they expected from her. In an interview conducted months after the initial one, while she waited for admissions notifications from higher education institutions, I asked Luisa what she thought her parents expected from her. Luisa replied,

[Pause] To finish college, do good in college. I think that they expect I'm going to do something with either theater or medicine. And I told my mom, maybe being there will change me, but if I do want to be an artistic director, obviously money is not going to be the biggest thing I'll be concerned about, making so, so, so much money. But maybe that'll change. Maybe I will want to earn a lot more money and be a doctor.

Luisa grew to believe that her parents had accepted the idea of her majoring in Theatre, and began to think that perhaps she would one day be concerned about earning a high income. However, once she was at the stage where she was deciding what higher education institution to attend, she shared that she wanted to keep pursuing the Arts. When asked about the expectations she had of herself, she shared,

The same. Hopefully it'll be one of those two. I really want to be an artistic director. I think that'd be great. Even now, just being in classes, the Drama I class where I have to direct, or be in the play, I just love it so much, even mentoring with the cabaret theater. And dance and stuff, I do it so often, and I think I've worked so hard in that area since my freshman year. I almost don't want to imagine having to stop after high school. When I didn't get into USC for theater, I cried, and it was mostly because I'm like, 'Is this going to be the end of me ever doing drama?' And my mom was like, 'You're such a

drama queen!’ And I was like, ‘No, really! What if I go on to UCLA and I can’t do drama any more? That’ll kill me. I don’t want to stop. I can’t imagine stopping.’ It’s like you’re taking me apart.

At this same time period, Mr. and Mrs. Marín shared their expectations of Luisa - most of which remained consistent with their previous expectations. From the onset, Mrs. Marín had been most open to Luisa majoring in Drama in addition to a “career,” while Mr. Marín was mostly focused on the expectation that Luisa would graduate from college. During our third interview, I asked Mr. and Mrs. Marín about their expectations, and Mr. Marín shared,

*Como le dije yo el día que la fuimos a llevar ‘okay hija, desde hoy en adelante empiezas por tu misma, tu vas a decidir por ti misma porque ya nosotros ya no vamos a estar aquí, tú sola vas a saber a qué hora te vas y a qué hora llegas, a qué hora vienes, a donde te vas, a donde no vas.’ Ósea, you’re on your own, como dice uno. Ya y fue cuando ella – pues yo digo que ahí ya es cuando uno la mira ya de adulto.*

Like I told her on the day we dropped her off, ‘Okay honey, from this day forward you will be on your own, you will make your own decisions because we will no longer be here with you. You will decide at what time you are out and at what time you return, where you go, where you don’t go.’ I mean, you’re on your own, that’s how you say it.

And so that was when she - well, that’s when you look at her and realize she’s an adult.

Overall, Luisa’s parents were happy and grateful that she had achieved her goal of attending an institution of higher education. He affirmed this by sharing,

*Está bonito y te sientes contento, realizado a lo mejor como padre también, y te dan orgullo tus hijos. Aunque es lógico regañas, te enojas y todo, pero el orgullo que traes por dentro no te lo quita nadie. No te lo quita nadie.*

It feels nice and you feel happy, accomplished as a parent, and your children fill you with pride. Although it is normal to reprimand your kids, and you get angry at times, that pride you feel will stay inside you and no one can take it away. No one can take it away.

For the Marín family, expectations of going to college for the purpose of social mobility had Luisa and her parents at odds at the start of the CGP. However, as time passed, Luisa affirmed her love for studying the Arts. Although she perceived her parents expected her to follow the medical route with the goal of earning a higher income, it became clear to her that her parents only wanted what was best for her, and so she compromised by studying the Arts and declaring an English major as well. On the other hand, Mr. and Mrs. Mejía felt satisfied with Luisa's desire to continue her studies and experience a higher education that would enrich her life.

The Carrillo family shared a few similarities with the Marín family. Sofía Carrillo and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo, did not share the same expectations in regard to the purpose of college-going. For a long time Sofía had planned to study Theatre while in college, but her parents were against it. The reason why Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo were not in favor of Sofía studying Theatre revealed itself in the first interview. Mr. Carrillo said,

*Yo le sugiero que agarre otra porque no me gusta el tipo de actuación. Me gusta que agarre una profesión, profesión a profesión. La actuación, por lo menos yo, no lo veo como una profesión. Si nó, una profesión que le de una buena calidad de vida y moralmente una buena calidad de vida, y en la actuación no lo va a conseguir eso. Por lo menos, yo eso no lo veo. Desde un principio que empezó a decir, le digo 'Nó, no estoy de acuerdo con ella en eso.*

I suggested that she study another career because I don't like Theatre. I'd like for her to study a profession, profession, profession. Acting, at least how I see it, is not a

profession. A profession gives you a better quality of life and morally a better quality of life, and she won't find that in Theatre. At least, that's how I see it. From the very beginning, when she started talking about it, I said, 'No, I do not agree with that.'

Mr. Carrillo adamantly rephrased his thoughts, saying,

*Yo quiero que agarre una profesión, que tenga una profesión, algo que la haga sobresalir. La actuación es temporal y a lo mejor es una profesión pero yo no lo veo así. Yo no lo veo como una profesión.*

I want her to study a career, to have a career, something from which she can succeed.

Acting is temporary, and maybe it is considered a profession, but I don't see it that way. I don't see it as a profession.

From Mr. Carrillo's perspective, Theatre was not a line of study that translated into a profession or career. This was of special concern to him because he wanted Sofía to study something that led to a potentially higher income and a better quality of life. This expectation, placed within the family's financial context, made sense - especially considering that Mr. Carrillo had recently become unemployed and the family was struggling to make ends meet. Mr. Carrillo elaborated on the necessity of studying a career instead of major like Theatre - in his viewpoint, a career provides flexibility when it comes to a faltering economic market. Closely tied to that idea, Mr. Carrillo advised that at enrollment time Sofía choose multiple courses that corresponded to Theatre and profession so that she would still make progress in case she changed her mind in the future. This viewpoint, shared during our first interview, was elaborated on by Mr. Carrillo saying,

*Yo le dije que tenía que estudiar, y no nomás enfocarse en [Teatro]. Si no, agarrar dos o tres clases por si cualquier problema que tuviera con una, pudiera seguir con otra. Yo le*

*he dicho, 'fíjate cuales son las clases que te pueden servir por si cambias de mente por cualquier motivo. De cualquier cosa o otra, te sirve ese estudio, y si agarras una clase que no te sirve, no te va a servir de nada, no te va a contar, tienes que empezar de una vez al principio.'* No a dicho ni sí ni no, pero pues yo no estoy muy de acuerdo en ese tipo de estudio que ella quiere.

I told her that she needed to study, not simply focus on [Theatre]. Instead, to enroll in two or three courses in case she encounters problems with one, she can continue with the other one. I've told her, 'Look at which classes will help you out in case you change your mind. That way, regardless of what happens, the courses will still help you, and if you take a class that doesn't help you, doesn't help you at all, and it won't count, then you'd have to start from the beginning.'" She hasn't agreed or disagreed with me, but I do not agree with the type of courses she wants to take.

During a later interview, around the time Sofía had heard from and denied from most of the colleges she applied to, Mr. Carrillo revealed another reason why he did not agree with Sofía studying something that was not a career. Reiterating his sentiments from previous months, Mr. Carrillo shared that he did not understand the reasoning behind studying something that would make it difficult for Sofía to find future employment. An older son of his had attended WyoTech, a for-profit technical college to study automobiles, and when he graduated he was left with a massive loan debt and not able to find a job in such a specialized field. Mr. Carrillo was concerned with making sure Sofía did not make the same "mistake" as her elder brother. Mr. Carrillo shared,

*Muchas veces no empujan a analizar. Muchas veces pasa eso: que ellos quieren ir a prepararse para un estudio para trabajar en algo que a veces no lo hay o es muy difícil.*

*Y cuando va a la escuela le dicen a uno que les aconsejen a los hijos que vean en que rama es en lo que van a estudiar - en algo donde si haga oportunidades de que sean empleados cuando terminen. Pero a veces ellos se aferran a cosas que...*

Most of the time you are not pushed to analyze. This happens a lot: they want to prepare for a certain field in order to work in a field where sometimes there is no work or it is difficult to find work. And when we go to school they tell us to advise our children to think hard about the field they want to study - where opportunities for work exist once they graduate. But sometimes they cling on to ideas that...

Mrs. Carrillo then chimed in, and said, “*Que les nacen. Cosas que les nacen que ellos quieren.* Things they are passionate about. Things that they are passionate about and they want to do. ” Mr. Carrillo then added,

*Si, pero que es imposible, bueno no imposible, pero muy difícil conseguir el trabajo.*

*Como le pasó a [nuestro hijo]. Terminó y todo y no pudo conseguir [trabajo]. [Estudió] para arreglar carros de carreras.*

Yes, but those are impossible, well not impossible, but very difficult to find work in. Just like it happened to [our son]. He graduated and everything and he wasn't able to find any [work]. [He studied] how to fix automobiles.

The advice that Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo gave to Sofía was a reflection of their own understanding of the steps necessary to have a better quality of life and upward social mobility. They did not want Sofía to experience financial uncertainty in the future, especially after witnessing their son follow a field he was passionate about and then have trouble finding a job in that field.

Meanwhile, over the months that followed the initial interview, Sofía mulled over the advice her parents gave and her passion to pursue Theatre. Although Sofía had an affinity to

acting and had spent many hours in the Theatre club at her high school, the advice her parents gave weighed on her. During our second interview, as Sofía waited to receive admissions notifications from the schools she applied to, she shared,

I was planning on studying performing arts but my parents were very insistent that I didn't, so [choosing my major] was kind of like 'Eeny meeny miney moe, I'm going to study this.' I got into [a] psychology class in school and that was when I started realizing what I wanted to do. Well, it wasn't that I wanted to, it was more that I had to. I knew I had to find a different option because my parents weren't really happy with what I wanted to do. At the same time I kind of just wanted to please them because I knew that either way I was going to go to college and once I was there, I mean, if I didn't like it, I know that I can easily transfer or I can change my major and stuff like that. But yeah, their opinion came into consideration. I wanted to study one thing but they were so insistent in me doing another that I just said, 'Okay, I guess.'

Sofía never gave an indication of understanding her parent's motives behind their advice, and that seemed to add to her feelings of disillusion as she journeyed through the CGP. What this data shows is that parents' advice to follow certain careers or paths are given not because they do not care about their student's future or don't care for the Arts. The reality is that parents provide advice and develop expectations based on their own knowledge, based on their own life experiences. As shown through the example of the Carrillo family, Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo did not want Sofía to pursue a career in the Arts, not because they did not care for them, but because based on their experience, the Arts would not provide a better quality of living than they currently had. And for them, the purpose of going to college was to have the opportunity to be socially mobile and have a better quality of life - so why waste that opportunity? This is very

much a perspective of a family who has had to struggle in many ways, including economically.

The González family also shared a history of financial instability. During our first interview, Mrs. González shared her expectations of Luciano, saying,

Hopefully the highest he possibly can but if he gets a good paying job where he's happy, he's paid well, gets good benefits, I'd like him to be indoors. My parents really worked themselves to the bone and it was always physical labor and it was for very little money. It was a lot of hard work in the fields. There are no benefits there and they didn't get anything out of it. Actually, they worked really hard and they paid for everything on their own. I'm amazed at what they did with it but that's that generation, our generation's not as, they're very spoiled, we're very spoiled. But I know that he doesn't really dig being outdoors to work. I know he doesn't really want to be outside sweating. He's a lot like me in that way. I know he doesn't want to labor. I don't really want him to be laboring. That's the whole point of getting an education so you don't have to work as hard.

Just as it was the case with the Marín and Carrillo families, Mrs. González' expectations of Luciano were based on her own experience of seeing her family earn a living as farmworkers and wanting her son to live a life with less physical labor. Mrs. González added,

I hope that he's going to have a nice, comfortable life, have a job that he enjoys, and that just has to go to make it every day. I hope that [Luciano] is a responsible person and that he contributes to his community. What I expect is that he'll at least be a hard worker and that he'll work hard at whatever it is that he does, in whatever job that he decides to get. What I expect is for him to get a better job than he could if he didn't have an education. I don't want him to have to work so hard. I want him to have a more comfortable life and not have to struggle all the time, wondering where his next check is going to come, or if



he's going to have enough money. The way we kind of are now, living check to check. I just don't want him to struggle.

The financial struggle the family experienced on a daily basis was also a contributing component of the expectations Mrs. González had of Luciano. Luciano was well-aware of the expectations his mom had of him, and she verbally reiterated them to him every so often. Luciano shared, "My mom, she wants me to go. She really does want me to go and kind of the reason why I want to go is because it'll give me some self-fulfillment. I truly feel like I have to go." When asked to be specific about what he felt his mother expected of him, Luciano said, "For me to have really good grades in high school, progress onto college, have really good grades in college, and then graduate there and get a really good job. I would help her financially and stuff."

Luciano was cognizant that the promise of social mobility and an opportunity at a better quality of life were contributing factors to his mother's expectations of him. However, despite being aware of those expectations, Luciano showed trepidation in his ability to fulfill those expectations. On our first meeting, Luciano highlighted this very fact by saying,

I think I'll have some trouble along the way, but I know I can picture it happening. [I might have trouble] just trying to find the right way, so to speak, trying to find the way. When you think of pathway, you think of a certain route where it's like you have to do something and that opens your door to something else. That's what I think so I want to try and open the right doors where I want to go. I want to have good grades and go to college and graduate and I want to have a good job. If I try hard enough, I know I can [achieve them].

Luciano opened up during his last interview and revealed that he did not feel he had met the

expectations he had of himself, but felt optimistic in achieving them. He said,

Well, up to now, I think not yet. I think I still need to be in college first, and then I'd be, like, super—I'd be like, 'Okay, I've done everything that I wanted.' But I also kind of wanted to work. I didn't want to do something crazy when I work. So, like, Route 21, it's a little store, so I think that would be really happy not doing [manual work]. My dad also told me that he wouldn't want me to be doing manual labor, so if I'm not doing that, I'd feel really good about myself, because I wouldn't be doing something that my parents wouldn't want me—they wouldn't want to see me doing that. So I'd be happy if I'd be in college and I'd also be working.

He echoed the reasoning behind his mother's expectations of him, sharing the dream that he would one day have a better quality of life than his family members had. In our last interview, Mrs. González reinforced her hopes and expectations of Luciano, and furthermore, highlighted the reason why achieving social mobility and having an opportunity to a better quality of life.

Mrs. González shared,

I'm really all he has to look to as far as ever him needing anything in life or falling back on. I tell him I want him to stand on his own two feet and be able to rely on himself, even if it's just working consistently always. But if he wants something better and I'm not here, then he needs to be able to have that education to be able to do it. He just knows that there's no other option. He just needs to have a better life.

The González family, along with the Marín and Carrillo families, perfectly delineate the reasoning behind the expectations they hold. Expecting their students to major in something that leads to a career - as a more secure means of achieving the desired social mobility - and to attend college is all done with the purpose of breaking the cycle of financial instability or a life of

backbreaking labor. However, not all parents share the same reasoning behind their expectations for their students to go to college - or even the expectations students have of themselves.

**College-going for personal growth.** Having the expectation of achieving a college education is also based on feeling that college is a place for growth and to transition into adulthood - and this was certainly the case with the Cuellar family. Mr. and Mrs. Cuellar were first-generation college students, each having to find their way through college by being first in their families to attend. As parents to Michael, they have been able to guide him through the CGP, using their own experience as a compass to Michael's navigational strategies. Mrs. Cuellar highlighted this sentiment as she shared hers and Mr. Cuellar's basis of their expectation for Michael to go to college. During our third interview, Mrs. Cuellar exclaimed,

He knows regardless of what happens, me and Bernard and our family are always here for him. We'll all [be] supportive of him. But we also know that to grow you need to fly. You need to do your own thing and be your own person. Like I said, we've done our life. I explained to the boys, 'Me and Dad have done our life. We've made our mistakes. We've gone to school and did our thing. Now it's your time to go and explore and do things.' We've always encouraged them since little. It wasn't, 'If you're going to college,' it's 'Where you're going to college.'

Mrs. Cuellar continued to share their philosophy on the importance of having Michael share on the college experience, noting that it was important for him to "see there's a lot of world out there." Mrs. Cuellar's message had been strong ever since the first interview, as she said,

I want him to experience that because my husband experienced that. He had the college experience. He played for UC Berkeley. He did all the fraternity and things that I never experienced, I want my son to experience. I tell him 'Be selfish with your time right now.

This is your time. Of course, make appropriate choices, but go and experience things that I didn't do, that we're giving you the opportunity for you. As long as you do, of course, grades, do what you have to do as a student, you can have fun also. But grow and have that time for yourself. Figure out who you are as an individual. Not what we are because we're done.' I said, 'Been there, done that. Our time's over, but you are barely beginning and have fun, appropriately. Be responsible for your choices.' But definitely, we've pushed that since the beginning. Well, I've pushed that since, like I said, day one.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Cuellar expected Michael to fully immerse himself in the college experience, and although they knew there would come a time when he would feel homesick, they also knew that with their encouragement he would not return home until he graduated. This message was affirmed during our third interview, which occurred after they had received admissions notifications and learned that Michael had been accepted to the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

We know there's more out there that we didn't even get to see, that we want you to see, and we've kind of exposed them to that, both of them. And so that's why I think he's ready. I mean, of course, we're scared. I mean, he didn't see that, 'cause he's right now in that elated stage of, 'I'm out of here!' But that he always knows that he can come home. And this past Easter, I went to my family's for Easter, and everybody was talking about Michael. 'Congratulations, Michael! Oh, my God! We're going to go visit you in Hawaii. We're so proud of you!' So he was getting all this love and attention from all my family that are just so proud of him. His godfather said, 'You're an example to all your little cousins. Hey, you did it, now let's go to the next generation.' Because my grandmother, of course, to let you know, is not English-speaking, not from this country. My mom went to junior college, I went to college, trying to do better than the last generation, and that's

what I think we've done. Now I feel kind of happy and privileged to say that my kid's ready. Because I know a lot of family members we've had, they do that to their kids.

'OK, you can go, but don't go too far. You can stay, but stay right here. You don't want to be that.' No, I tell my kids, 'You be what you want to be. What do you want to do with your life? What do you want—not what I want you to be, 'cause it's your life.'

For Mr. and Mrs. Cuellar, coming face-to-face with the reality that Michael was heading to college and accomplishing the goals and expectations they had for him and for themselves was a privilege. Due to their own experience going to college, they were more comfortable with the idea that although it would be sad to see Michael leave home, the benefit of getting a college experience and growing and learning was a stronger pull. Mrs. Cuellar continued to share during that third interview, highlighting the need and expectation for Michael to discover and grow in a college setting:

And you know, it is college. That's the whole goal, for him to be on his own and discover stuff, meet new people. He can't just be here with us. And that's one thing I did. I left, but I didn't go that far, so I never experienced that college experience like [my husband] did at Berkeley or other people that have said they made so much friends, they learned so much stuff. I didn't get that, so I kind of want that for him, and I kind of think he needs to go away and do that. I think it's—I think it's a good fit for him.

In that moment, Mrs. Cuellar shared her expectation of seeing Michael leave to a college that was not close to home because she felt she missed out on a special experience and opportunity when she attended a college and lived with her parents. Mr. Cuellar expressed more of his viewpoint in later interviews, and using his own experience as a student-athlete at UC Berkeley, shared his expectation of Michael and his college experience. As Mr. Cuellar explained the day

they dropped off Michael at Hawai'i, he shared the words he left Michael with. Mr. Cuellar said, '[My younger son] started crying. I just told Michael, 'I'm not going to cry. You've got a great opportunity. I've been there. You're living the dorm life, you have your dorm, you can go tailgating at football games, you're learning, you're going to become a professional. This is a great opportunity. Just take that.' He goes, 'Yeah, Dad, thanks.' And then he walked away. He knew everybody was crying.'"

Interestingly enough, it was also in this interview that Mrs. Cuellar commented on how Michael's college-going as a transition into adulthood was also a transition for her. She shared, 'I'm talking about both role and relationship, because now me and his relationship has changed. Of course, as they're teenagers—but he's always been very frank with me, he's always opened up and, 'Mom, this is frustrating.' We even had a conversation before he left, we had an argument, and we both weren't wrong, and he kind of turned to me and he goes, 'This is the first time as an adult that I'm not wrong and I'm not apologizing,' and I'm like, 'No, this is how adults speak. We both misinterpreted that same thing, and we're both not wrong, and that's how adults are.' Where before as a parent, a mom and a son, you are wrong and I am right and you apologize and there's consequences for that action. Whereas now he's an adult. It's not black and white any more, the issue. And that's a change. For me, in my role as a mother, I have to step back, and I can't make those choices for him any more. I can't say, 'You've got to be home at midnight. You have a curfew. You can't eat that. That's too much. I don't like that friend.' I don't have any say in what he does, and that's OK, because that's an adult, and I trust him. But it's just letting go of that relationship.'

The case of the Cuellar family sheds light on the expectation that in sending a student to college

there will be growth and it initiates a transition from childhood to adulthood. This transition reverberates through the family, and as noted by Mrs. Cuellar, is felt by members of the family and changes the relationship amongst each other.

Expecting college-going as a pathway to transition into adulthood and as a place for growth was also found in the González family. During our first interviews, both Mrs. González and Luciano entertained the idea of attending a four-year university. Mrs. González shared, “I’m hoping, I’m expecting him to go to college, even if it’s maybe community college and then go to a four-year after that, transfer. He’d like to go to a four-year straight and if we can get some kind of help or scholarships or whatever, then I’m hoping he can do that.” Despite expecting Luciano to attend a college, Mrs. González felt he was not ready to take on the challenges that a university campus would bring, especially if he had to move out of his home. When asked if she felt Luciano was ready to leave to college, Mrs. González said,

No, sometimes I don’t because he’s been very sheltered. He’s not like other kids that’s always out and about and doing this or that or the other. The Teen Center was one of the biggest things ever and that to me was great because I felt safe with it, especially being that it is in front of the school. I work at Indio High School so it’s like right across. I felt like, ‘Okay, well at least I can get him,’ but that’s how I’ve always been. Now that he’s older, I let him and he goes here and there, just around the perimeters around the school too, so I know he’s a little sheltered that way and I know he can really use the experience of going to college.

Mrs. González continued,

It’ll help him grow tremendously because although I’ve kept him safe than what he would have been if I had not been as protective, I know that there’s a lot that he hasn’t

been exposed to as well, just regular lives. But no, I don't think he's quite ready but I know once he gets in there he's one of those sink or swim and I think he'll swim. But he's got to get his feet wet. He's got to get familiar, otherwise he'll never learn. He'll never learn what it's like.

Luciano echoed his mother's sentiments during his first interview. When asked if he was ready for college and was college material, Luciano said,

I think I have the potential. I have the desire. Sometimes, I don't know how to explain this. As a class, we did things together like when we took the SAT, we all went as a class and signed up. I'm so used to doing things as a class and as a group together, but when you go to college, you're an individual and you're supposed to do things by yourself and that's the way it should be in life. I don't know, I wouldn't do things by myself. I would have to have someone with me I would say. If I had someone with me at the time, even when we were applying for colleges online, I had my friend with me help me out. If I had questions, I'd probably ask my friend for help, call my mom or something. College material, I would say I am but .... I would need help.

During the second interview with Luciano, he revealed that he had missed the UC and CSU deadlines, but had applied to University of New Mexico - Highlands, to which he was accepted soon after. Although Mrs. González felt more comfortable with Luciano staying at the local community college as a way to gain more experience and maturity, she did not want to stop him from considering other options. This sentiment was highlighted when she said,

I'm okay with him going to school here at a community college. I think it's great. As a matter of fact, he's going to have to do his GE's anyway and it costs a lot, a lot less here. I think he'll be more comfortable; it'll be more convenient, more accessible, but like I



said, I don't want him to get so comfortable that he doesn't want to go and spread his wings anymore, you know? I want him to see what's out there and what's available to him.

Meanwhile, Luciano felt excited and nervous about the New Mexico - Highlands offer that was still an option. Luciano shared, "Like do I really want to do this? I'm going to have to verify in my head like 'okay, I'm going to do it,' and so that's when I'll probably call and tell them what my plans are and I'm probably going to go over there. I think college is a great option. I think if I go to New Mexico I'll feel really good. I'll be like 'Okay, you know, I'm going to college.' I'll be very nervous because it's college, but I'll feel good that I'm going."

After a few months, however, Luciano and his mother came to an agreement about staying at the local community college - and his single-day visit to the New Mexico - Highlands campus was what triggered the decision. During our third interview Luciano shared,

I was completely intent on going to New Mexico because to me it sounded like a good college, plus, I got accepted there. So in my head I was just like, 'OK, this could be good, because I'm going somewhere new.' And then I kind of realized, cutting it pretty close to where I'm going to be graduating soon, and I haven't gotten that much information, nor have I—I didn't make that many calls. So the plan is definitely, it's still up there in case of anything, but I would just need to get more information about what I need to still go over there.

It appeared that Luciano was beginning to decide on attending the local community college while entertaining the option of attending New Mexico - Highlands in the near future. It was also in that same interview that Luciano reaffirmed his mother's perspective on using his time at the local community college to learn a few things before moving on to a four-year institution. When

asked if he had any hesitations about attending the local community college, Luciano said, “Not really because my family has gone there, and it’s pretty much all I want to do, learn how to drive, so I can get to and from where I want to go. That’s pretty much what I need.”

Mrs. González also shared her optimism in seeing Luciano entertain the idea of attending the local community college. She shared her expectations of Luciano if he were to stay at COD and said,

I’m hoping he’ll just be familiar and get some experience and know what college life is more or less about. He’ll know more or less what’s expected of him academically, and he’ll have at least more of an idea of what it’s going to be like when leaves. So just getting the experience from school, that’s pretty much what I’m hoping he’ll get.

A few months later, Luciano expressed his satisfaction in deciding on COD over New Mexico - Highlands:

I feel kind of better about it, because New Mexico is really far away, and I don’t know how that would work out if I don’t know how to drive and what I would do. Even if I could do housing over there, I don’t know how I’d feel being so far away. And if I do go to [the local community college], I’ll be much closer. I’ll still have time to, like, try new things. Like I’ll get my driver’s license and all that, get my information, and not only that, I’ll be transferring to a college that would be more of my preference.

Pressed on describing his sense of achieving the expectations he had once shared, Luciano provided an optimistic response. He said, “I think I would [be able to reach my expectations]. ‘Cause COD for me, I think it would just be like, one, getting the first years of my education that I needed, and the second year would be, again, the education that I needed, but it would also serve as a second chance for me to do all the stuff that I wish I could have.” When asked if he

saw the local community college as his second chance, he simply replied, “Yes.”

Throughout our interviews, Luciano and his mother, Mrs. González, conveyed the belief that Luciano was not yet ready to step into a four-year institution, yet both knew that they wanted to keep pursuing a higher education. Similarly to the Cuellar family, the students were expected to attend higher education institutions for many reasons - specifically highlighted in this chapter as a place for achieving social mobility and have a possibility at a better quality of life, as well as a place for growth and transitioning to adulthood to occur.

### **Financial Concerns Masked as Distance Expectations**

The data gathered for this study also revealed that student and parent perceptions of affordable and attainable options - coupled with their financial situation - plays a role in their thought-process and decision-making. For families who are faced with financial difficulty or perceive college to be unaffordable, these perceptions and realities lead to them masking financial concerns by showing discomfort about the distance of a desired higher education institution. These perceptions around what is affordable and viable shapes student and parent expectations during the CGP and thus, makes for a much more complex process.

In the case of the Carrillo family, the financial situation that they found themselves in played an important role in the decisions they made throughout the CGP. At the time when college applications were due, Sofía was interested in colleges outside of her hometown where she would be required to move out of her home and live on or near campus. Given her goal, she applied to several CSUs, hoping she would achieve her goal of attending college. However, by the time the second interview was held, both of Sofía’s parents lost their jobs, making their financial situation fragile. The introduction of this new influencing factor greatly impacted the family. On the parental side, Mr. Carrillo disclosed that the financial crisis his family was

experiencing affected how he interacted with his family and how they handled the issues and decision-making, which inadvertently affected how they experienced the CGP. Mr. Carrillo said,

*La situación económica y lo que está viviendo uno ahorita yo creo nos afecta a la mayoría por una u otra razón. Y hay veces que está uno nervioso o en el caso de [Sofía] a veces está ella nerviosa. Hay veces que le pregunto algo y le molesta o a veces uno esta molesto. Yo pienso que es parte del sistema en el que vivimos y la situación por la que estamos pasando ahorita.*

This financial situation and what we are going through greatly affects us one way or another. There are times I am stressed or [Sofía] is stressed. Sometimes I ask her something and it bothers her, or sometimes I am bothered. I think it is part of our environment and our current situation.

This, of course, impacted how Mr. Carrillo and Sofía communicated about such important matters, and influenced their lack of communication, which made being on the same page about the CGP difficult. From Sofía's point of view, the financial situation was also influencing how she engaged in the CGP. During our second interview, she shared that she had been afraid of finding information on the exact cost of the colleges she was interested in because she did not want to find out that they were unattainable options. When asked if she had shared those fears with her family, she simply replied, "No." Sofía also shared her perceptions of the expectations her parents had of her, and specifically her mother's, and said,

She'll tell me 'Don't go somewhere where we can't afford it,' because some schools if I don't get on-campus housing, I have to rent somewhere and it's going to be pretty expensive, especially if it's in San Bernardino or Monterey Bay, it's going to be pretty expensive. My parents don't want anything too expensive because neither one of them

are working so it would be pretty hard for them to afford it.

From Sofía's perspective, her mother wanted her to go to a cheaper school. In this case, "cheaper" meant a school that not only was perceived to have lower tuition costs, but also lower living costs. Sofía felt this was due to their financial situation, but was also because of her older brother's experience going away to college. Sofía added, "I know it's going to be hard on my parents because my brother left the house to go to school in Sacramento and he didn't really like it that much but it wasn't a university." Sofía's brother had gone to a technical college to study automobiles, and after him and his parents amassed a large quantity of college loan debt, her brother returned home and was unable to find a job in the career he studied. Overall, applied to this specific case, this meant that Sofía felt that her parents were weary of her going to a college that would be costly and lead to debt - especially while the family's financial situation was unstable. However, although Sofía knew of all this, she also interpreted her parents' messages as them not having high expectations of her and not supporting her in her dreams of going straight to a four-year.

What Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo shared in their interviews affirmed Sofía's views - somewhat. Sofía was correct in that her parents wanted her to consider a college that would keep her living at home with them, but these expectations were financially-driven. During our second interview, Mrs. Carrillo reiterated this message, saying,

*Dice que ella no se quiere ir a un colegio, que ella se quiere ir directamente a la universidad y es lo que le dijo su hermana. Le dijo 'es que te sale más caro y es lo mismo.' No, dice 'no es lo mismo.' Y pues yo le dije 'bueno pues yo no se, tu eres ustedes son las que saben, las que ya están en la universidad son los que saben lo que te están diciendo.' 'Pero yo no me quiero ir al colegio.' 'Bueno, vamos a ver entonces si te vas a*

*ir directamente a la universidad, a cual es, a cual te van aceptar, a las que aplicaste, y vamos a ver la está más cerca la de San Bernardino.'*

She says that she doesn't want to go to a community college, that she wants to go directly into a university, and that's what she told her sister. Her sister told her, "It is more expensive and it is the same thing.' And so I told her, 'Well, I don't know anything, you are the ones who know about this, the ones that are in college are the ones who know what they are saying.' 'But I don't want to go to a community college.' 'Well, let's see if you will actually go straight to a university, see where they'll accept you, see which ones you apply to, and then we'll consider the one that is closest to San Bernardino.'

It was clear that Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo wanted Sofía to go to college, but felt that their financial situation would not allow that. Being immigrants to the United States and having no personal experience with the U.S. higher education system, the only thing they knew about college was what their other two daughters had told them as they themselves attended the local community college. Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo did not know much about state and federal financial aid, which left them feeling helpless in their current situation. This feeling of helplessness translated into them advising Sofía to still go to college, but do so nearby. The only option available would be the local community college, which would save them on tuition and living costs. When asked to explain their conversations with Sofía on this matter during their second interview, their perspective on the issue was very clear. Mr. Carrillo shared,

*Yo la otra ves le dije que porque era la razón por la que se quería ir lejos si podía estudiar aquí y me dijo que quería irse para esa universidad. Le dije, 'tú no has ido a esa universidad, no la conoces, no sabes como sea. A las de aquí sí, pero a las de allá no y te quieres ir a esa universidad y está lejos, una. La otra, le dije, "es que alo mejor nosotros*

*no podemos económicamente ayudarte para todo lo que tu necesitas y está lejos. Estando lejos hay que pagar renta, hay que pagar comida, hay que pagar todo eso, y alo mejor ahorita con la situación que tenemos no podemos. Pues dice 'pues es a la que yo quiero ir,' dije 'pero viendo aquí cercas, porque no vas a una de aquí cercas.' Y ya pues no salimos muy bien de acuerdo porque le dije yo 'piénsalo,' 'pues no, yo me quiero ir a esa.' Estaba aferrada para ya últimamente no, pero yo si hable con ella y le dije de las situaciones. Que si yo estuviera trabajando bien, pues no se nos pondría tan difícil y ya no me dijo nada. Nada más pues como que no está muy bien de acuerdo ella.*

The other day I asked her why it was that she wanted to go so far away if she could study locally and she said it was because she wanted to go to a university. I told her, “You have never visited that university, you don’t know anything about it, you don’t know how it is. The ones here, yes, but not the ones over there and you want to go to that university and it’s far, for one. Second, I told her, ‘Maybe we can’t help you financially for all that you’ll need and you’ll be far away. Being far away means having to pay rent, having to pay for food, having to pay other stuff, and maybe given our financial situation we can’t do that.’ Well, she said, ‘That’s where I want to go,’ so I said, ‘Look nearby, why don’t you go to one nearby?’ We did not end that conversation in good terms because I told her, ‘Think about it,’ and she said, ‘No, I want to go out there.’ She was stubborn, but I had to talk to her about our situation. I told her that if I were working it wouldn’t be as difficult and I wouldn’t have said anything, and she didn’t say anything after that. It just seems like she doesn’t agree with me.

It was during our third interview that Sofía shared an understanding of her parent’s financial situation and how it was affecting her decision-making through the CGP. She shared that

because her communication with her dad was weak, and it was mostly her mother she was conversing with, it had been her mother who had repeatedly told her that the local community college was the best option. Sofía discussed her reaction, sharing, ‘It sucks. [laughs] But I mean, I have—I have to understand it’s not easy for them, considering, like I said, they’ve had a hard time, they don’t have jobs. There’s just not enough money for me to just go all out at once right out of high school. I think that’s it.’ Sofía knew that the local community college was a more financially viable option from her parent’s perspective, but was not happy with it. She said, ‘I’ll tell them I don’t really want to go to COD’, and then they tell me it’s helping them, it’s better for them financially, so it’s like, ‘Well, yeah, I guess.’ That’s pretty much it.”

Despite the financial situation facing the Carrillo family, Sofía did not lose hope in one day achieving her goal of entering a four-year institution. When asked if she felt she had achieved her parent’s expectations, she answered,

Yes and no. Because I know they would have wanted me to go straight to a university, that was something my parents repeated to me frequently. But even though I’m not there yet, I feel like I’ve convinced them that I could do more than they thought of. I’m in college now, I do my homework, I get my assignments done, and I know that they feel good when they know that I’m doing these things. So in a way, yeah, I think I have.

Sofía also knew that her parents wished the best for her, and although her plan to leave home for college did not work out the way she originally thought it would, she knew her parents still had hopes for her. During our last interview Sofía shared,

So they have that in their heads, that thought of, ‘I know you can do it.’ I know that I have the opportunity now to drop out of college. I can push myself to get into a better school. But like I said, my oldest brother went to college, and he ended up getting



screwed over by all of the loans that he got. My [sister] didn't go to college till later. My middle brother, he didn't go to college at all. My youngest brother went to WyoTech. It was, like, a waste of time. He didn't profit anything of it. It didn't take him anywhere. That school is to work with cars, and right now he's got a completely different job. The school didn't help him out at all. And then [my other sister] went to college, and she's not going to school any more. So like my dad said, he told me recently that I was his last bit of hope to just get through it and do the right thing.

The expectations that Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo had of Sofía to attend a local college was never a reflection of what they expected from her in the grand scheme of things, but rather, was a reflection of their financial concerns given that they found themselves with no employment and struggling financially. In addition, their past experience of seeing their sons enter high loan debt and study a career that did not gain them employment, also played an influencing factor in the college-related expectations they had for Sofía.

The Marín family shared a similar story. Unlike the Carrillo family, the Marín family had employment, but their source of income was not steady. Mr. Marín's fast food restaurant was struggling and along with their mortgage, they were just able to make ends meet. Luisa had hopes of leaving California and to the east coast for college. Luisa described,

There's New York, there's Texas, there's Maine, there's Connecticut, there's Boston, there's so much history everywhere. I don't want to just be here; I want to be able to live somewhere new. I see college as that one time where I can. I told that to my parents, and they were like 'Oh, she'll grow out of it,' but obviously I haven't grown out of it. I'm taking it serious. If I can get into a good college in the East Coast, I want to.

Although she had always felt that her academic endeavors were supported by her parents, and

had seen her father grow in excitement during a sponsored trip to the University of Rochester campus during her junior year of high school, she did not understand why her father was not supportive of sending her there. She added,

There will be times that my dad gets me mad sometimes where he'll be like, 'I'm not going to help you if you go out of state.' Kind of like, 'I don't want you to, why go out of state if you can just go here.' I try explaining it to him but I think he just gets that whole typical ignorant. He just thinks that I'm some teenager who is melodramatic or whatever.

I wish sometimes that he would just see it how I see it.

Luisa's perception of her parent's expectation of her was hurtful to her, specifically because she felt her father's hesitance in being supportive of an out-of-state college would not allow her to take advantage of the accomplishments and hard work from high school. Luisa explained,

I don't know how to say this without being too cocky or something, but it's me that has done all this work through high school, it's me the one that stays up studying at night and it's me the one who's going to be at college. I'm going to be the one who's going to have to go wherever I go and I want it to be somewhere where I know I'm going to feel that my dreams are kind of being accomplished and all the things that I've worked for, where I'm going to be happy, where I'm going to be satisfied. I think my mom's a lot more understanding than my dad can be just because I feel like sometimes my dad kind of gets sidetracked and will tell me, he'll try going into the whole out of state thing, which leads to him not wanting me to go, which leads to why this and that and it's like I don't want to get in there, 'Mom!'

Furthermore, Luisa was concerned that financial concerns would be the reason why she would not fulfill her goal of heading to her dream school in the east coast. Luisa shared,

I know they love me; I don't doubt that they don't, but I don't want the whole distance thing to be the reason why I don't move away and why I don't accomplish what I dream of doing. I don't think my parents make a lot to say 'You guys are rich,' but I know we're better off than a lot of people. My parents are still struggling because like we bought the house really expensive and they're trying to lower the house payment and my dad at the restaurant, it's going so slow. I'm hoping that I could get the financial aid I need because I would hate for money to be the reason why I don't go to the school that I want to go to, but then that's where like you know, San Francisco State, and that's cheaper. That would be my reason for having to go to a cheaper school, if I couldn't get enough money so that's a worry for me.

However, Luisa's interpretation of her parents' messages were not accurate. Mr. Marín was cognizant of the fact that Luisa would need their support as she ventured into higher education - and were willing to support her. Mr. Marín felt that "*[La universidad] es difícil pero también algo que tienen que hacer para que puedan lograr lo que quieren porque también están solos aya. Van a necesitar apoyo de uno a través de aca de donde está uno.* [College] is a difficult, but necessary endeavor in order to achieve what students want, because they'd be alone out there. They'll need our support from all the way over here.' " Nonetheless, Mr. Marín felt Luisa was tenacious and would achieve anything she set her mind to. Unbeknownst to Luisa, her parents, but in particular her father, urged her to attend a nearby college due to the financial stressors that an out-of state college would bring.

Despite not having received admissions notifications from universities at this point in time, the Marín family were discussing their colleges of choice, preparing for when the time

arrived. In the case of Mr. Marín, he revealed he really liked University of Rochester, but wanted a closer college in case of emergencies. Mr. Marín said,

*Rochester me gustó. Miré, anduve mirando ahí, preguntando cosas con los estudiantes, mire los dormitorios, mire campus y todo. Me gustó, pero está muy lejos de aquí. Es de una esquina a otra esquina, no es como que vas agarrar el carro y vámonos, ahí estás. Es lo que yo le digo a mi hija 'mija, hay que tratar de buscar acá. Dios no quiera que te llegue a pasar algo y tu sabes, aquí de volada.' Digamos San Francisco, siete horas ahí estás, ocho horas ahí estás. Pero cuando estas hablando ya de Nueva York, de por aquel rumbo, estamos hablando buen tiempo y el dinero económico también. Pero nos gustaría algo aquí cercas.*

I really liked Rochester. I looked, checked it out, asked students a lot of questions, saw the dorms, the campus, everything. I liked it, but it is too far from here. It is all the way across the country, and it's not like you can just jump in your car, get going, and you're there. That's what I tell my daughter, 'Honey, let's try to find one here. God forbid something happen to you and we won't be there.' San Francisco is about seven, eight hours, and you are there. But when you talk about New York or anywhere in that vicinity, we are now talking about a good amount of time and a lot of money. So, we'd like something nearby.

Mr. Marín added,

*Entre más cerca, mejor para nosotros que Luisa estar tan lejos. Como le digo, está aquí cercas, Dios no quiera, pasa algo, dos horas, tres horas lo máximo y ahí estás. Allá, seven. Uno como padre, quieres a tus cachorritos lo más cerca que se pueda. Está lejos*

*allá, imagínate. No era como decir 'okay, ahí voy,' no. Aquí en algún día festivo, algún día especial, familiar, va y viene digamos. Osea te sientes más cerca. Menos gastos.*

The closer she is, the better it is for us, as opposed to Luisa being far away. Like I said, being nearby, God forbid, something happens and in two, three hours maximum you are there. Over there, seven. As a parent, you want your children as close to you as possible. Being that far away you can't just say, 'Hey, I'm going over,' no. Here, on a holiday, a special day, a family festivity, she can come any day. She'd be closer. And it would cost much less.

Mr. Marín provided more specificity and drove his point home by outlining the detailed costs of a trip to New York, including the cost of hotel, air flight, and dinners.

In addition to pushing for a nearby college for Luisa, Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo also want her to go to a college they can afford while staying cognizant of out-of-state fees, especially when considering their financial situation. Mrs. Marín explained,

*Va a tener que ir a una escuela donde nosotros podamos pagar lo que están pidiendo. No nos vamos a ir a una escuela en donde vamos a decir 'si hija, te vamos a mandar ahí y no vamos a poder pagarla.' Es lo que estamos esperando hasta al fin, ver donde la aceptan, si le van a dar algo en la escuela, que es lo que va agarrar, y ver qué es lo que podemos pagar. Luisa sueña mucho, pero yo creo que al final va a tener que conformarse donde ella pueda ir. Ella sueña en grande. Ella se quiere ir lejos, grande, no le importa cuanto cuesta, como es, como se va a ir. Ella nomás piensa que es fácil, que nomás es de irse.*

She will have to go to a college where we can pay what they ask. We are not going to a college where we will tell her, 'Yes honey, we are sending you there but we won't be

able to pay a thing.’ We are waiting until the very end, see where they accept her, see if they’ll be giving her money, how much she’ll get, and see if we can pay. Luisa has a lot of dreams, but I believe that in the end she will need to conform to where she can go. She dreams big. She wants to go far away, regardless of how much it costs, what it is like, how she’ll get there. She thinks it is easy, that you just pick up and go.

Mr. Marín also pointed out that this would be a decision that would be made by the family as a whole, and that the needs of the entire family would be considered before making a final choice.

Mr. Marín said,

*Tiene que ser decisión en familia. Porque no va a decir ella ‘me voy acá,’ nomás porque ella se quiere ir hasta allá. Y si no se puede pagar, como se va a ir hasta allá? Si fuera gratis, pues okay, ¡pues vete hasta donde quieras!*

This will be a family decision. Because she will not say, ‘Ok, I’m going over here,’ just because she wants to. And if she can’t pay, how will she get there? If college were free, well then yes, you can go anywhere you’d like!

The on-going and evolving discussion around this issue led to tension, and Mrs. Marín described how Luisa would get upset and frustrated when they would suggest she not go to an out-of-state college. However, Mr. Marín understood that young people sometimes did not know how difficult it was to earn money, adding,

*Es lógico que cualquier estudiante que aspira a irse a lo mejor, cuando ellos no saben de números, de donde sale dinero, o como entra. Ellos nomás es tiran mano y ‘dame,’ pero ya que sepan en realidad lo que es trabajar, pues entonces.*

It is normal that a student aspire to go to the best school when they don't understand costs, where the money comes from, how you earn it. They only stick their hand out and say, 'Give me,' but one day they'll realize the reality of work and earnings.

Luisa, on the other hand, appeared somewhat aware of the financial issues, which pushed her to apply for scholarships in hopes of minimizing the financial strain on her parents. However, once the Marín family received admissions notifications and learned that Luisa was accepted to both UCLA and University of Rochester, the time for concrete decision-making arrived. Luisa shared that their conversations about college occurred on a daily basis, and were especially focused on deciding between the two campuses, and added,

I got into Rochester before I got into UCLA, and when that happened, I said, 'I'd really want to go here.' And my dad said, 'What are you going to be doing all the way over there? Just go to school here.' And I said, 'I'm not going to start this with you, Dad. I'll let this go right now.' I mean, I'll tell him, but once I see he kind of gets a bit more on the attack side, he's not going to listen to me side, it's not worth arguing with my dad. So I'll just be like, 'Whatever.'

As time progressed and the time to submit their intent to register neared, Luisa began to change her mind on where she would attend. She began to consider the repercussions of going away, especially emotionally. Luisa noted,

I had an "Aha!" moment. I feel that sometimes my dad or my mom would kind of imply, 'You're just being a tad selfish thinking about deciding without us, or without thinking how much we'd miss you.' So I started thinking of that more. I'm like, 'Maybe it will really hurt them if I go away to New York.'

This revelation, in addition to considering their financial situation and having a dream in which her younger brother told her she would be missing his high school theatre performances if she left to New York, shaped a new attitude on her college trajectory. Luisa decided that she would delay her plans of heading to the East Coast. Luisa explained,

And then when I got into UCLA and not NYU, I'm like, 'Maybe it would be good to kind of chill out here on my own, closer to home for a while, and then maybe in two years or four years, like, for graduate school, I'll be more ready to leave.' So I started maybe thinking more about how my parents would feel if I did leave, and I started thinking a bit more about my brother, the whole paying for college thing. So I started looking more into scholarships. I don't know. I mean, just lately in general, everyone talking about, 'Where are you going? Where are you going?' It hasn't really hit me yet, but just like, 'Crap, I'm almost graduating. I'm almost going to be sort of on my own in a bit.' Those thoughts started to hit me more.

Ultimately, Luisa decided on attending an in-state college, a decision that pleased her parents. The CGP experiences of the Carrillo and Marín families exemplify not only the complexity of the CGP itself, but how perceptions of affordability, attainability, and their financial situation, all play a role in the decision-making they engaged in. It is important to note that for families experiencing financial concerns, such as was the case with these families, decisions made and advice given may have had financial concerns at the root of it all. Specifically in the cases presented, financial concerns led parents to advise their students to attend local or nearby higher education institutions due to the cost of leaving farther out or out-of-state would be too much of a financial strain.

## **Conclusion**



This findings in this chapter were presented in order to exemplify the expectations that students and parents hold and experience as they make their way through the CGP. The two prominent expectations discussed - college as a place for growth and transition into adulthood and the influence of parents' financial situation and sense of affordability on the CGP - are evidence of the complexity of the CGP. The ways in which students and parents perceive and act upon their expectations, and make decisions through their realms of possibility, are critical in shaping their CGP journey, as well as our understanding of Latina/o CGP.

## **Chapter 7: Negotiations & The Realm of Possibility**

The CGP is a time period in which individuals dream and enact their pursuit of a higher education. As discussed in previous chapters, the CGP is an emotional journey, and especially one that reflects the family's knowledge and familiarity of the CGP. This study has also discussed the various expectations surrounding the CGP, and specifically the varying expectations students and parents can have and how these may result in conflict or agreement. The following chapter will continue to advance the conversation on the CGP, now focusing on how families negotiate their CGP based on what their realm of possibility is. While each family's story may differ in their exact circumstances, together they shed light on how truly complex planning, navigating, and heading to college is for Latina/o families.

### **Defining Negotiation and the Realm of Possibility**

As students and parents experience the CGP, they encounter numerous day-to-day events that influence the way they understand situations and the choices they make thereafter. These events encompass anything ranging from grades on a test to a conversation with a friend about the "right" steps for deciding on a college to getting a raise at work. These events can be environmental/external and internal. The unexpected environmental influences that families encounter and shape their realm of possibility can include things like financial situations (i.e. loss of jobs, unexpected unemployment, unstable financial situation), application choices (i.e. missed deadlines, list of schools applied to), admissions decisions (i.e. being accepted, being denied), and enrollment (i.e. did they enroll?). Internal influences could be a divorce or death in the family. This, in and of itself, is the negotiation that occurs; negotiation is how students and parents "deal with it," how they engage with these events while journeying through the CGP. Using this understanding of "negotiation," the "realm of possibility" can be understood as what

students and parents feel is possible (See Figure 2). The realm of possibility is fluid and changes over time as new events come up and negotiation occurs.

### **Explaining Negotiation and the Realm of Possibility: How Do Families Negotiate?**

The following families are presented as selected examples of negotiation and the realm of possibility in the CGP. This chapter will highlight their existing situation and detail how they have navigated through the CGP. These are their stories.

**Familia Marín.** Luisa Marín and her parents negotiation of their CGP and their shifting realm of possibility was mainly centered on financial situations and the academic confidence she and her parents felt. As previously described in Chapter 6, the financial situation in which the family found themselves played a key role in their CGP. Mr. and Mrs. Marín's financial concerns, in addition to the application choices and admissions decisions, were part of the negotiation that helped shape each of their realms of possibility.

Mr. and Mrs. Marín's backgrounds and the financial instability in their fast-food business, filled them with the yearning of wanting to help their daughter start a cycle of continued social mobility. To this, Mr. Marín said, "*Se ella se llega a graduar de algo, como quien dice ya tiene el futuro de sus hijos seguro también. Entonces ya va hacer una cadena que va a ir de ahí. Ya va a ser un ejemplo para sus hijos.* If she graduates she'll have secured a good future for her kids. She will start a chain reaction. She will set an example for her kids." The family history, and the expectation that Luisa would go on to college and achieve a higher education - which was part of their realm of possibility at this time - all provided an important background to Luisa's college-going.

Over the course of the time period when the interviews took place, Luisa displayed a combination of tenacity, fear, and excitement over the prospect of going to college and realizing

her dream. Although her intent of going to college was always strong, it was also riddled with a constant measuring of pros and cons, sacrifices, and the complexity of any major life choice. At the beginning of her senior year of high school, Luisa contemplated studying English and Drama, hoping to one day become an artistic director or a high school English teacher. During this time she also set her sights on attending the University of Rochester in New York, which she learned about when attending a college-going program there. Of this plan, Luisa shared,

That's my plan, either going to a UC or going to the East Coast somewhere. But I don't know. I got to step in some of the classes and I think it'll be a lot funner in a way. It'll be harder, but I think I'll enjoy the independence. Not that I'm trying to get away from my parents, but I think it'd be something new. I guess you really get to see what's out there and I want to be involved in college somehow. I think it's going to be harder, whether I want to be in the science or theatre and English. I think it's going to be a lot of reading, from what I hear. It's a lot of studying and I know I definitely can't slack.

At this time, Luisa's realm of possibility was one where she believed this plan was feasible, acknowledging that she had the skills to succeed. The drive and self-confidence she portrayed, along with the family history and her parents' support of her college-going and expectations, allowed her to make these plans at an early stage without feeling doubtful. She shared those beliefs, and added,

I think I'm really self-motivated. I know that I want to be successful. I have enough people to look at, or I've seen, how people fail and I don't want to be like that. I don't want to just be another person in my family or that they know she was smart and look at where she's at now. I don't want to be that. I want to be better and I want to prove anybody that's ever even doubted me wrong, and I know I can do that. I will.

Luisa felt confident about taking the step to leave home and go to college, and although she admitted that she knew she would feel homesick and might need a bit of time to get used to a new setting, she felt confident that she would adjust properly and swiftly and would not see these as reasons to drop out. Her parents felt the same confidence in Luisa. From the very beginning of data collection, Mr. and Mrs. Marín showed confidence in Luisa's ability to perform academically, citing that she was doing very well in school and would be graduating in the Top 10 of her class. Mrs. Marín shared that she felt Luisa would be able to adapt well to being around new people and a new environment. Mr. Marín spoke to her ability to handle a new environment and her tenacity to succeed, and shared,

*Es difícil pero también algo que tienen que hacer para que puedan lograr lo que quieren porque también están solos aya. Van a necesitar apoyo de uno a través de aca de donde está uno. Están solos, andan allá ellos, están como quien dice enfrentando la vida para poder hacer algo en el futuro. Es una etapa difícil de su vida que tienen que enfrentar y no por la soledad que va a tener ella. [...] Ella se va y no regresa. Yo regrese y ella se va a ir y se que a ella no le va a dar miedo. Ponle que a lo mejor si nos va a extrañar y lo que sea, pero yo se que ella va a poder hacer. Ella se mira que está lista para irse y hacer lo que quiere hacer. Nosotros somos los que tenemos miedo de dejarla ir y pensar que le puede pasar algo pero ella está muy segura de lo que quiere.*

[College] is a difficult, but necessary endeavor in order to achieve what students want, because they'd be alone out there. They'll need our support from all the way over here. They will be alone, they will be facing life's challenges in order to make something of their future. It is a difficult stage to encounter, and not just because of the solitude that she will feel...she will leave and not return. I returned and she will leave and she will be

fearless. It may be the case that she will miss us or whatever, but I know she will succeed. She seems ready to leave and do what she has to do. We are the ones that are afraid to let her go, and we may think harm could come to her, but she is very sure of what she wants.

Luisa's fearlessness is what assuaged Mr. Marín's fear, evident when he said,

*A mi hija le va a ir bien. Es aventada mi hija, ella lo que tiene la Luisa, cuando se propone algo, no descansa hasta lograrlo. Es aventada, ella sabe lo que quiere y sabe que no es fácil y tiene que luchar. Le va a ir bien a mi hija.*

My daughter will do just fine. My daughter, she is fearless. The way she functions is that when she makes up her mind on something, she will not rest until she achieves it. She is fearless, she knows what she wants and she knows it will not be easy and that she will have to fight hard. My daughter, she will do just fine.

The perception that both parents shared of Luisa's ability to conquer the goals she sets for herself was a perception they held throughout the data collection period - and one on which they never wavered. Perhaps this was because they did not see Luisa make any missteps through the college-going process itself, such as fail to meet a scholarship or application deadline. That responsibility to handle her responsibilities made them feel more confident about supporting her to go to college. The negotiation of these issues gave Mr. and Mrs. Marín confidence to tackle the many other decisions they would have to make in the coming months, especially in regard to finances and their ability to help Luisa financially.

Luisa's self-confidence - and availability of application fee waivers - explained her actions at time of college applications; Luisa applied to a plethora of schools, ranging from the California public universities, to privates, to out-of-state options, such as Fordham, NYU, and

Rochester. However, University of Rochester was on the top of her list, and she explained it was because,

I think would be to go out of state for college just because I want to go somewhere new, just for college because when I grow up, I want to come back and be closer to my parents. But I don't want to be in California forever, the world's too big to just be here my entire life. I need to try something new and meet new people and see new things.

That's why I did Rochester.

Luisa did share, however, that her dad was not very keen on the idea of Luisa possibly going to the East Coast, and said,

My mom's kind of like 'whatever, I'm going to miss you, and I'm not going to lie, it's going to hurt me if you leave, but if this is what you want to do, I can't do anything but support you.' My mom's kind of adjusted to it a little bit more; my dad sort of.

Unbeknownst to Luisa, Mr. Marín's hesitation in letting her daughter go far away was not a reflection of his beliefs about education, but rather issues of finance and safety. As detailed in Chapter 6, although they lived in a comfortable home, during my early visits to their home I sensed a tense atmosphere when conversation topics shifted to that of money, therefore their worry about financing college was understandable. Luisa's parents' small fast-food shop in town had been a town landmark for decades, but it was no longer as frequented as it once was. Because the family's income relied on that shop, knowing that college-going required, to them an unknown amount of money, it became stressful to not know whether the family would be able to stay financially afloat. In regard to the finance issue, Mr. Marín said,

*Olvidate, a la hora de ir, ella, mi señora, y yo, no estamos hablando de puro avión. Hay hotel, comida, y aquí \$100. Ósea, todo eso también tiene que ver uno. Como le dijimos a*

*[Luisa], “mira, tu hiendote es como quitarnos dinero que te puede ayudar en algo.”*

*Entiendes?*

Forget about it, when it is time to visit, her, my wife, and I, we aren't only talking about the flight. There's the hotel, food, \$100 here. I mean, we have to consider all of it. Just like we told [Luisa], “look, you heading out there is like taking away money from us that can help you in something else.” Do you understand?

Mrs. Marín added,

*Ahorita si tenemos un poquito aguardado por si nos piden, porque no sé cuanto vayan a pedir. Despues si va a tener que ser más por más.*

We have a bit saved right now in case they ask us to pay because we don't know how much they'll ask of us. After that, we'll have to take it month by month.

Intricately tied to finance was the fear of having their daughter live far away, and truly, was the fear of safety. Mr. Marín explained,

*Dios no quiera, pasa algo, dos horas, tres horas lo máximo, y ahí estás. [En Rochester], siete. Uno como padre quiere a sus cachorritos lo más cerca que se pueda. Está lejos allá, imagínate. No es como decir, “okay, ahí llevo ahorita.”*

God forbid something were to happen, but two, three hours max and you are there. [In Rochester], seven. As a parent, you want your babies the closest possible. Imagine, her so far away. It's not like we can say, “Ok, I'll be there soon.”

Mr. Marín had explained his viewpoint in regard to his daughter attending a far-away college, but he had not expressed his concern in that manner to her. Luisa's mom, however, provided a glimpse as to why Mr. Marín reacted in such manner: financial stress. Luisa shared, “My mom will tell me ‘Try to fill out as many scholarships as you can because I want to help you and we'll



do whatever we can for you to go to college, but anything that can help us is good right now.’”

Also in display is the family dynamic in how information is shared. Mrs. Marín served as the mediator and pacifier between Mr. Marín and Luisa. These minor details, which may be overlooked or dismissed as mundane, do play a role in how college-going is negotiated within families. The negotiation of their financial situation, as well as their sense of affordability, shaped Luisa’s and Mr. Marín’s realm of possibility. At this moment, leaving to an out-of-state college was not perceived as feasible, which was clear to Mr. and Mrs Marín but not to Luisa.

Soon after, Luisa began to understand her family’s financial situation, and her realm of possibility shifted as she negotiated their financial situation and her new possibilities. While Luisa knew that her parents would try their best to come up with the money to send her to college, she appeared to understand that to make college-going a reality, she would have to receive financial aid and scholarships. She shared her strategy in dealing with a possible scenario of not being able to afford going to her college of choice, and said,

That’s kind of why I applied for Cal States, because they’re not as expensive as UCs, but that’s why I’m trying to do different scholarships, too, like through the Young Woman’s Ambassador, through the Ophelia project, and stuff, or through Pathways to Success. I’m trying to do all those. I tried working and saving up some money. I have like \$400, not that much, I have \$400 that I haven’t touched. You know how hard that is when you go to the mall and there’s like those really cute shoes just sitting there, calling your name?

After a few weeks, Luisa received notifications from the schools she applied to, and found out that she had been accepted to both Rochester and UCLA. By February, her preference in colleges had been a bit modified, with UCLA, USC, NYU and Rochester as her top choices. Luisa shared that her stronger consideration of Los Angeles-based schools stemmed from a

realization she had about her family and finances - she realized that if she went far away, her family might not afford to visit her or bring her home very often. Given the closeness of the family unit, she decided that going to a top college closer to home would not be a bad choice.

After looking at it, I think UCLA is, like, a better fit financially for us right now, and I think it's a better school than the smaller schools in New York. My parents are like, "We don't want you to go." [pause] Yeah, I think I'm going to stay here, which is kind of funny, 'cause my English teacher, he was just like, "I don't think I've ever seen a student be sad that they have to go to UCLA!" I'm not sad, but you know?

She further explained her rationale in being happy with UCLA, and provided insight on her negotiation process, and said,

After I talked to you the last time, I kind of had, like, an "Oh, crap!" moment. I asked my mom, "What if I do get in a big school but we can't pay for it?" She was like, "I don't know what I'm going to do, but we'll find a way." I told my mom, what if it's not \$14,000, what if it's \$17,000 or something?" I did the math and if I get two scholarships, that means you only have to pay, like \$7,000. And there's things that weren't included in the secure money, like work-study or whatever. [...] So yeah. I don't know. I think if anything we'll just have to look more into loans, because I want to go to a good school. My parents are excited for UCLA. My dad liked it. I liked it. I like the campus. I like where it's at, too.

She further shared,

Like I said, I don't think [UCLA] is too too close, but it's not too far, either. I think being close for holidays I won't have to worry about, 'Can we pay for my plane ticket?' Or I could be down within two, three hours for my brother's birthday or my brother's plays. If

I ever get homesick, I don't know if I will, but if I ever do, I could always just come down that weekend.

In following the Marín's negotiation of the CGP, it was apparent that their financial situation and their confidence in Luisa's academic abilities were key. Hesitant as her dad may have been in letting her go to an out-of-state school, Luisa felt supported by her family to continue her education, and although she ultimately made some compromises (i.e. leaving her family to be far away was not worth struggling to pay for college), they found a comfortable meeting place, which was to attend UCLA. Given Mr. and Mrs. Marín's dream was sending their children to college, they were only too happy to finally be able to do so. However, accomplishing that goal did not come without a price. To be able to pay for college, Mr. and Mrs. Marín had to make financial adjustments and Luisa had to take out loans. Their confidence in Luisa's ability to succeed, their ability and willingness to make financial sacrifices, and their relatively open communication, made the negotiation process and college-going a reality for Luisa.

**Familia González.** In the case of Luciano González and his single mother, Mrs. González, the negotiation during his CGP was complexified by their financial situation, misinformation, family dynamics, academic self-esteem, and aspirations. Throughout his senior year Luciano exhibited signs of little to no knowledge of how to get to college. For example, when an English class assigned the personal statement to be done over the summer, Luciano did not do it, and his reluctance to seek help and ask questions from teachers and other people of authority - and his teachers not being persistent with him - led him to not complete the assignment. He said,

Toward the end of the summer, one of my friends had asked me if I finished this assignment. I'm like, "I didn't know about any assignment over the summer." Apparently

that's what happened and I didn't know about this assignment. It was the personal statements and I didn't know what they really were meant for. I thought it was just some assignment.

Throughout much of our conversations there was a sense of lack of academic self-esteem, of giving up easily, all despite the fact that he said he believed he could get things done. He did not appear to be able to do things alone, and felt he would need to feel comfortable with that in order to go to college. He further shared,

I would have to have someone with me I would say. If I had someone with me at the time, even when we were applying for colleges online, I had my friend with me help me out. If I had questions, I'd probably ask my friend for help, call my mom or something.

College material, I would say I am but I would need help.

Luciano carried these sentiments from the beginning of the year, and they lingered throughout the full data collection time period. For example, at the beginning of the year, Luciano envisioned attending the local community college, but wanting to go to UC Riverside (UCR) as well, and had applied to CSU San Bernardino and New Mexico Highlands. Luciano shared that he did try applying to UCR when his English class had carved out time during class, but stopped when he got to the personal statements section of the application. When asked why he did not complete the application, Luciano said, "I don't know. I didn't think I could write. Aren't personal statements supposed to be really long? I didn't have anything planned. There was only so much time in class."

The selection of the colleges to apply to became one of the biggest components of Luciano's negotiation in the CGP. Furthermore, the realm of possibility greatly narrowed for Luciano at this time period. Luciano ended up applying to two four-year colleges: New Mexico

Highlands (a recruiter came to class and had them fill out applications on the spot) and CSU San Bernardino. However, he referenced applying to UCR and other colleges well after the deadlines to apply to CSUs and UCs had passed, and yet he spoke about applying as if the application period was still open. Luciano was clearly not knowledgeable of the application process, not understanding the necessary steps in applying to college, not knowing the deadlines, and relying on friends and hearsay for college knowledge. Further showcasing Luciano's misunderstanding of the higher education system was his understanding of community college as a two-year process. Both Luciano and his mom believed in that community college is a two-year process, and as early as February, began entertaining the idea of spending only two years at the local community college, Luciano himself saying, "I probably most likely would go to COD, probably do that for two years."

Luciano's confidence in his academic abilities was an internal negotiation he experienced. By the second interview, Luciano was unsure of how he would perform in school, began planning on going to New Mexico Highlands, and he displayed unclear plans for how to pay for college, all while hinting that finances would be an issue. Luciano's hinting of financial worries had only popped up in his first interview when he shared that his mom disconnected the internet at home, but a few months later appeared to be really concerned about applying for scholarships to help pay for college. However, Luciano seemed to not have a clear plan on how to finance college, saying,

Sometimes we talk about how my mom will pay for me when I need it because she tells me I don't have to work. But I feel like I should work [...] I go to the Teen Center so I got some scholarships, I took them off the scholarships wall, and I have them. I'm just deciding when to do them but I took the time to get them, so I'll probably figure out a day

to do those. Maybe I'll try to do them at the Teen Center, but yeah, that's how I think I'll try to do it, like, scholarships and I'll have my mom pay for me and stuff, and if I do decide to work anyways, I'll try and that'll just add to me paying off.

As time passed and his realm of possibility shifted, Luciano's plans changed as well. Close to the end of the school year, Luciano began expressing a stronger sense of feeling that the local community college would be a better plan, sharing,

I should do two years at COD to do my [general education] 'cause I think that's beneficial, because, like, you know, it doesn't cost a lot to go there, plus you're still getting the same amount of education you would get anywhere else, because it's your GE. So I'm thinking, if I'm going to do that, that at least gives me time to know where I want to go for sure, maybe somewhere a little closer, 'cause I still do want to go to UCR, and if I do go to COD for two years, I can just get everything I need ready in that time so I can go apply there.

Unfortunately, Luciano did not appear to have any knowledge on how to enroll in community college, but luckily Mrs. González knew how. However, Luciano relied on what his friends were doing and hearsay when navigating class availability. He shared his thought process on enrollment during the time period right after his high school graduation, saying,

I hadn't chosen any classes. And when I was making calls - because I was calling some of my friends to say, like, what classes are available, because they have internet. So I was like...and they told me that, like, "Oh there's no more English classes, there's no more math classes." And I was like, "Oh, alright then, maybe I should wait until next semester to see if there's any more classes available." So that's what I'm trying to do.

Particularly interesting in this case is that Luciano's idea of seeking help and information relied on his friends and mom, both of which may not have accurate information. This illustrates how not knowing what the CGP entails can be detrimental to achieving college plans, and furthermore, how it influences the realm of possibility.

By the fall after he graduated from high school, it became clear that Luciano decided going to a four-year college would be delayed for the time being. However, his and Mrs. González' decision to enroll at the local community college was the decision they came to based on their negotiation through the CGP. In the end, Luciano opted to wait until the Spring a full year after high school graduation to enroll at the local community college.

Luciano's mom, Mrs. González, provided her own perspective on how she experienced the CGP with her son. Mrs. González, herself a single mother, Type 2 diabetic, had higher education experience. In the 1990s she was briefly enrolled at CSU San Bernardino, but then due to her father's illness, had to move back home and attend the local community college, where for the last 20 years she has been working on receiving her A.A. She shared that she had hopes that he would go to a better college than she did, and believed that her son was capable of doing so as long as he put forth the effort.

Mrs. González shared her background of being the first of her family to go to college, the daughter of parents who worked tirelessly in the fields, and her resulting appreciation of receiving a higher education. Mrs. González added,

The benefit is that you can get a better paying job. You're more likely to get something that you want or that you like, somewhere you don't have to struggle or work too hard outside. You can grow culturally, you grow friendships there, you grow socially, but

more importantly the education that you get or whatever, can be a benefit when you're out in life and trying to pursue work.

Mrs. González understood that education was the path to social mobility, and shared that she would support Luciano to go to whichever college of his liking, regardless of where it was and what it took to get there.

Mrs. González's hopes and dreams for her son had not yet wavered, but she did feel that Luciano was not ready to leave home for college, and perhaps was better suited to stay at the local community college and slowly spread his wings. However, she was still hoping that he would apply and be admitted to as many colleges as possible so that he could have options. However, at the time of her interview, college application deadlines had already passed, but Luciano had been able to apply to two colleges.

A very important factor in Mrs. González' negotiation of the college-going process were finances. She provided a glimpse of their financial situation and said,

I want him to have a more comfortable life and not have to struggle all the time, wondering where his next check is going to come, or if he's going to have enough money. The way we kind of are now, living check to check. I just don't want him to struggle.

However, she did not share extreme concern for how they would pay for college, but she knew that she would depend on Luciano taking the time and initiative to apply for scholarships. She said she explicitly encouraged him to apply and search for that money, and she was sure he would take action.

By late January/early February of Luciano's senior year, it became clear to Mrs. González that her son was not ready to leave to college. She shared,



I don't think he really knows what's involved. Realistically, I'm seeing him...if he's not going to be motivated and go, because I'm not going to do it for him, he's probably going to end up going here to COD first and then he'll go out. It's probably the best thing to do anyway, but I just don't want him to get too comfortable either.

Mrs. González shared her frustration of her son not taking the initiative to apply for financial aid, and interpreted it as an additional sign that he was not ready to leave for college. She shared, "Yeah, he's just not really good at that; he's lazy about doing stuff like that and he expects mom to do it, I think because that's how it's been so he doesn't have any idea that being an adult, it's like right there and he's going to have to do things for himself and that worries me." Mrs. González saw Luciano was too dependent on her, had no initiative, and had been too coddled by her to grow the skills necessary to tackle the college-going process head-on. She added,

I think I would have liked [him] to have gone somewhere four-year right away, but since...I don't want to do everything for him. I think he needs to do some of it on his own and he can see, maybe if it's a year down the line or two that, "Man, I should have done this sooner. I should have moved. I should have done it myself. I do have more responsibility and I need to take the initiative and not let my mom do it." So I think that's partly what ultimately showed me that he isn't quite ready. 'Cause look, if I still need to be doing things for him, that's not what college is about, or becoming an adult.

Mrs. González realized that her son truly did not know what leaving to college meant, and given that she felt he needed time to learn to be an adult, the local community college might be a better platform for Luciano to learn those skills while continuing his education.

As Mrs. González came to this realization, she became even more convinced that leaving to a four-year college was a goal saved for a later time. Considering the fact that the local

community college was less costly, academically feasible for Luciano, and a good place for Luciano to gain life experience, the local community college was what she pushed for. She added,

[The local community college], I know it's easy, it's doable for him. It's nearby, he has the convenience of being, well, really that's the nearby, the proximity of the school, but it's affordable, it's close, it's academically feasible for him, it's just all-around convenient, and you know, to get the GEs like I said. It's probably the most convenient thing for him. Then he'll get the familiarity of what it's like to go to college.

Mrs. González's negotiation of the CGP came to vocal fruition by spring of Luciano's senior year. She recalled,

“[The decision] was more myself, because I told you, he's not real motivated about doing things on his own, and I saw that he really wasn't, like, moving forward or applying to different places or looking up scholarships. So I said, “You know what?” I know he wants to go to school, and ultimately that's what matters. So to me, as long as he starts right away and not puts it off, I told him, “You know what? If worse comes to worst...” We both decided on that, “if nothing else has been decided and you haven't moved forward, you're going to start here and go to school outward. How do you feel about that?” And he's like “OK.” So that's how it ended up being, since it's already time and we're so close. I said, “You know what? You're going to start school.”

Mrs. González' consideration of multiple components regarding her son's college-going, such as whether Luciano was ready to go to college, whether he would be capable of handling personal issues, whether he would be responsible enough and capable of handling the academic difficulty in a college setting, led her to deciding he was not ready to enroll in college. However, it is

important to note that this decision did not interfere with her desire and willingness to help him enroll at the local community college. Interestingly enough, despite her own background in having gone to a four-year institution (albeit for a short period of time), there were many things that she was not aware of and misinformed about. She appeared to be under the impression that Luciano could apply to more colleges come summertime, and envisioned Luciano following the community college pathway. Mrs. González explained,

He didn't really apply too many places, it was just at [New Mexico Highlands] and COD. So what we decided, ultimately, it can still change, because if we apply and we put in more time, like, in the summer when I just have nothing else to do but that, if something comes up we'll still see if he can apply or what the deadline is for it. He still wants to go to a university, somewhere out, UC Riverside or something. But right now, what he's going to do, I think, is he's going to do the two years here...well, he's going to sign up for school. He's going to start in the fall.

By fall after high school graduation, Luciano had yet to enroll at the local community college.

Ultimately, what is clear from the case of the familia González is that both the student and the parent took the time to determine whether leaving home and going to college would be the right choice for them. Given the fact that we cannot foretell the future, it is unknown whether Luciano will eventually go to college, but in considering the situation at hand and understanding his and Mrs. González's thoughts and behaviors, the process was a complex one and his family dynamics, expectations, and aspirations came into play as he and Mrs. González negotiated the CGP.

**Familia Carrillo.** The case of the Carrillo family beautifully highlights the complexities and nuances of negotiation and the realm of possibility in the CGP. The Carrillo family's CGP

was a complex negotiation where both external and internal events were influential, including admissions notifications, financial situation, family history, family dynamics, and expectations. Ever since her sophomore year of high school, Sofia worked toward her goal of attending a four-year college. Once there, Sofia's initial goal was to study Theatre, but after her parents' insistence on studying a more financially viable career, she decided to focus on child psychology, with the goal of one day getting a Ph.D and opening a private child psychology office or a foster home. She worked very hard during high school, getting the grades to be able to go to college and graduate among the top of her high school class. Sofia was not the first of her family to go to college, but it was her older brother's attempt to go to college that inspired her to pursue her dreams of going. Sofia added, "Well it wasn't talked about very much until my brother went to college because one of my brothers was the first one to go to college. He's my boy brother and nobody before him went to college and he just decided to go to college and that's when everything was brought up." Aside from her brother, her mom has been the biggest supported of her dreams, encouraging Sofia to finish assignments on time, apply for scholarships, and find information on getting to college.

In regard to being supportive parents, Mrs. Carrillo said they were both extremely supportive of her endeavors, and shared,

*Lo que pasa es que si se lo brindamos. Lo que pasa que muchas de las veces yo me enojo con ella porque me dice las cosas en el momento que ella las quiere y ya las necesita.*

*Entonces le digo 'no, no es así, tiene que ser con tiempo, tiene que ser antes,' o no está uno disponible para el momento que tu quieres, en el instante que tu quieres, porque uno tiene cosas que hacer. Pero si la hemos apoyado mucho en todo, incluso esta como yo le digo 'échale ganas.' Hay veces que cuando está, como a ella le gusta mucho lo de actuar*

*lo del teatro, hay veces que salen a las 11 a veces de ahí, y que todavía que van a cenar, ay veces que voy a la una de la mañana por ella.*

We do encourage her. What happens is that a lot of the times I get angry with her because she asks for things that she needs on the spot. So I tell her, 'No, that's not how things work, things have to be done earlier, they have to be done with plenty of time.' We cannot be available at your request because we have things to do. But we have supported her a lot in drama, sometimes she comes out at 11pm, she still has to eat dinner, sometimes I even pick her up at 1am.

Mr. Carrillo added,

*Hemos hablado más con ella también, tocante a cómo más o menos tiene que ir evolucionando en la escuela y como tratar de salir adelante y como cuidarse también en la forma de estudiar, de no perder tiempo, de no malgastar su tiempo en otras cosas y no estudiar, y tratar que se enfoque en eso. Entonces en los primeros, no sabíamos muchas cosas de esas. Ahora, otra cosa que ahorita tenemos un poquito mas de tiempo también para dedicarle a ella en más formas, y cuando estaban todos, era un poquito más difícil porque estaban todos aquí nomás un poco más difícil. Pero ahora nosotros tratamos de entender más el estudio porque también hemos ido a muchos lugares de la escuela que iba ella a muchas conferencias y ahí aprendieron muchas cosas que uno no las sabía y luego uno no tenía la experiencia porque no estuvo tampoco en la escuela.*

We have tried to talk more with her about school, how to better herself, and how to develop better study skills like not waste time and to focus. With the first ones, we didn't know all that. Now, we have a bit more time to dedicate to her, and when everyone was here it was difficult to do that. But now we both try to understand how the education

system works, and we have gone to many school trips and we learned many things that we did not know before, things we never experienced because we were not in school.

Mrs. Carrillo even spoke about her experience in participating in a summer Migrant program at a UC where she stayed in the dorms for three days, while her older daughter stayed for a whole month. Of that experience she said,

*Y después yo estuve tres días ahí. Es bien difícil, pero es bien bonito y es depende y hay de todo. Hay de todo porque veíamos muchas cosas que 'wow.' Es donde te da miedo, a uno como papá, donde te da miedo que se vayan los hijos ahí porque miramos muchas convivencias feas, por eso te digo que el que va a estudiar, va a estudiar. Muchos van hacer sus despapayes y medios ahí, y fiestas y ahí yo miraba como de tanto de día como de noche. Entonces es el miedo que me da pero si es difícil. El estudio, los programas, y el convivir con otras personas es difícil.*

I was there for three days. It is difficult, but really nice, and there's everything. There's so much, and sometimes we saw things that made is say, 'Wow.' That's when we got a bit scared, as a parent, because you get scared for your kid to go there because we saw a lot of inappropriate things. That's why I say that those who go to study, go to study. Many go to cause mayhem and party day and night. So that's what scares me, and that's hard.

Studying, schedules, and living with others is difficult.

Mrs. Carrillo added that she had tried to get Sofia involved with the programs that the California Migrant Program offered so that she could learn more about college, but that Sofia had been more interested in participating in extra-curricular activities.

For Sofía, college appeared daunting because she did not know what to expect except that college would be more rigorous than high school. To this she said,

I'm pretty scared to go to college. I don't know what to expect. I know it's going to be hard. It's not going to be the same as high school, nowhere near the same as high school and there's going to be many more people. There are going to be different things to be experienced and stuff like that but I'm not sure.

Despite the fear of college being different, Sofia applied to CSUs in both Northern and Southern California, the closest being CSU San Bernardino and Cal Poly Pomona (which were chosen because of their proximity to her family). Sofia further explained that it had not been until late in her sophomore year of high school that she started paying more attention to her grades and working hard to get them up to par. At first she thought her grades would not be good enough to go to a four-year college and instead that she would have to settle for the local community college. However, since improving her GPA and gaining confidence in her academic abilities, she decided the local community college would no longer be an option. She added, "I don't want to feel like I'm working my butt off at school to get better grades to just go to community college where my high school grades don't matter anymore." Complexifying her desire to go to college and get to a stage that she has worked hard to get to were her worries regarding financing college. Sofia explained, "What I'm scared of is there'd be a point in college where I can't afford it anymore. Hopefully not dropping out of college. I mean... it's possible because neither one of my parents are working so it can happen." However, regardless of her fears, Sofia was confident she could achieve her goals, which she shared, saying,

My plan right now is to just keep my head up, keep working on school, try to keep my good grades up, apply to many colleges. My goal was to get into, doesn't have to be necessarily the best college, but a decent college that isn't a community college. Graduate

from high school, that's my goal, just graduating from high school and getting into a good college.

As time passed, and she waited to hear from admissions offices, Sofia began to feel demoralized by what she saw as Mr. Carrillo's the lack of support of her going to college. She started to feel like her parents - but specifically her dad - did not expect much from her, and it was all based on their experiences with Sofia's older siblings. Sofia provides further insight, saying,

They're probably expecting me to at just one point just crash and end up getting a job somewhere. [...] Sometimes I doubt myself because I feel like when they doubt me, they're not supporting me. It's either you doubt me because you know I can't do it and you're not going to support me, or you support me because you know I can do it.

In part due to the strained relationship with her dad - which she believed was in part due to her dad not wanting to acknowledge that she is no longer a little girl - Sofia admitted to not communicating her plans and happenings to her dad. Mr. Carrillo confirmed Sofia's suspicions that he did not think she was enough of a responsible and mature young adult to leave home.

Mr. Carrillo shared his view on Sofia's maturity level, saying that she was not mature enough and had not gotten the life experience needed to succeed in an environment outside of home. Although he admitted to feeling Sofia was academically ready, she needed to take some time to be stronger. Mrs. Carrillo was torn on whether she felt Sofia was ready for college, saying that although her teachers and counselors tell her that Sofia is doing well in school, her opinion is based off Sofia's GPA, in which she has not seen a huge improvement. Mr. Carrillo, on the other hand, thought that if she set her mind on excelling in school, she'd be able to do so. Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo felt she was not ready for the life challenges that would present themselves



while away from home. They saw her as the baby of the family, which impeded them to begin considering her as a blossoming adult.

However, Sofia did have a better relationship with her mom. Sofia shared the following about their relationship, saying,

My mom, I think sometimes she doesn't have very high expectations of me, like she probably has sometimes that doubt in her head but even though, she's still pushing me to try to prove herself wrong as well as trying to help me accomplish my dream. But my dad, I think he prefers I work rather than going to school.

Sofia elaborated, sharing that her mom liked her college-going plans and actually encouraged her to apply to even more colleges than she did. Given their financial difficulties, Sofia did clarify that her mom was not enthusiastic about all colleges, and encouraged her to go to those they could afford.

In spite of all of this, Mrs. Carrillo still encouraged Sofia to go straight to a four-year. It was clear that for Mrs. Carrillo, the realm of possibility still included attending a four-year college - just as Sofia had dreamed all along. To this issue Mrs. Carrillo said,

*Lo que pasa es como ya las demás entraron primero al [community college], es bueno también porque les dieron conserjería y les dijeron que lo podían hacer, el [community college], el colegio, dos años de colegio y luego ya les valían que porque le enseñan en la universidad los primeros dos años son lo mismo que le van a enseñar en el colegio. Entonces [su hermana] también por eso ya no se quiso ir y [su otra hermana] también por eso ya no se quiso ir. Dijo 'no, si es lo mismo.' Dije pero que venía haciendo lo mismo y aplicaron para no irse lejos, si no quedarse aquí mismo. Es en lo que hemos comentado no mucho con ella, 'o qué te parece, quieres irte al [community college]?' y*

*ella dijo 'no, yo quisiera también brincar a la universidad, aunque va hacer un paso bien largo, alto, y pesado,' a las pláticas que nos han dado a nosotros que es difícil. Yo le dije 'lo que tu quieras, y lo que tu tantees que también no vaya ser tanto frustramiento para ti.'*

The others went to [the local community college] first, and the [high school counselors] said that [was] something they could do, go for two years and that those would count toward the university because they are the same as the first two years of college. So then, her sister decided to not go straight to college, and then the same for the other sister...[who] said, 'Well, it's the same.' So it was basically the same, so they applied here to stay close. We've suggested to Sofia, "What do you think about staying at [the local community college]?" and she said she wanted to "go straight to the university, even if it is a long hard road." Our conversations have been difficult. I told her that she could do what she wanted and that she'd have to figure out if it would be too stressful for her.

Sofia added that although she would like to stay optimistic about the scholarship applications she has submitted, "You don't always get accepted for all the scholarships. If I'm renting an apartment and my parents out of the blue no longer can afford it, I will have nowhere to stay so it'll have to be either transfer or drop out of college." When it came to college-going logistics, such as where to live and transportation, Sofia was more explicit in detailing her parents' lack of support,

I've actually talked to my mom about it but I haven't talked to my dad about it because we recently just talked about it this, I'm not sure if it was Tuesday, Monday or Tuesday. Because I mean, if I'm lucky and I get accepted to San Bernardino, my brother lives in

San Bernardino. So he'd probably be the person I'd stay with, but about transportation, my parents, they're still holding back on teaching me how to drive so I'd probably be depending on a ride or the bus or something like that. They don't want to teach me. I've asked my parents and they're usually the ones to say they don't have time. But they'll be sitting here and it's like 'What are you doing tomorrow,' and they say 'Oh, nothing,' 'Oh, you want to teach me how to drive,' 'Oh, I have to do this.' It's like okay, so yeah, they're usually the ones that are busy.

Sofia further described the financial obstacles, knowing that even if she learned to drive, neither her nor her parents would be able to afford a car. Despite those issues, Sofia continued on her path to get to college, taking the SAT exams and sending her scores to the colleges she applied to. She also picked up scholarship applications and successfully applied for FAFSA. She also shared that she would love to be accepted by San Francisco State, but because it was so far and living there would be expensive, her top option was CSU San Bernardino. However, considering the financial and support issues, Sofia began to consider the local community college, COD, as a possible option. She elaborated,

I even considered, like if I don't get accepted, I just won't go to college for a year because I really do not want to go to COD. No matter what, I just don't want to but if I have to, I will. I just don't want to. I've worked so hard in high school to keep up with my grades. I know my freshman year and my sophomore year I kind of slacked it, I didn't slack it, but I didn't give it my all and these last couple of years I know [I've] been putting my head into it and a community college doesn't take that. It doesn't matter if you even graduated. I don't want all my hard work to just be there for nothing.

After a couple of months passed, Sofia did hear notifications from three of the schools she applied to, and none accepted her. This event became yet another to negotiate, and triggered a tremendous shift in her realm of possibility. At this point her only hope was CSU San Bernardino, but CSUSB had fallen behind on application reviews and would not have decisions until later. Going to community college slowly became a more realistic option, but Sofia was still adamant that she would avoid the local community college and enroll in a community college outside of her valley - which given her geographical location, would have to be outside the valley and would most likely require her to live away from her home. Most likely it is partly shame of not being accepted to a college and partly not wanting to feel like a little girl, Sofia's communication with her mom deteriorated because, as Sofia put it,

She treats me like a little girl. She's like, "Well, we can go talk to the counselors and see if they let you in." I said, "No, it's not about the counselors any more, it's about whether I get in or not. It's either yes or no, and if I get no, there's not much to do about it but wait and hopefully in two years, I'll get in." That's my only hope. She's kind of like in denial. She doesn't want to accept that I didn't get in. She still wants me, like, "No, you have to do something about it," but it's—like, it happened, and there's not much she can do about it, not much I can do about it but just wait it out. But she's like, 'No, you have to talk to your counselors' She just tries to avoid it—well, not avoid it, but just, she tries to work her way around it. And it doesn't work like that anymore.

It was also around this time that the issue of affording college became more pressing - and became another piece of the CGP to negotiate. For Mr. and Mrs. Carrillo, the financial difficulty they were experiencing – as they both had lost their jobs – conflicted with their hopes of her going to college. Mr. Carrillo explained,

*Esta difícil estar sobreviviendo. Esta difícil estar trabajando y luego pues ya no va haber ayuda para el mes que entra. Ya se va acabar el puro desempleo y pues no se. Tengo que buscar trabajo. Ya no en lo que trabaje, si no en lo que encuentre mejor, y es empezar. Cuando empieza uno así pues esta difícil. Por eso es por lo que yo le dije que se fuera aquí a estudiar aquí cercas porque aquí pues está la casa y no paga renta y para apoyarla pues para estar pagando renta y idas y venidas y comidas y todo eso lo pone más difícil.*

It's difficult to survive. It is difficult to work, and then help will cease next month. Unemployment benefits will end, so I don't know. I'll need to find a job. It doesn't matter what job, whatever best job I can find, and I'll begin. It is difficult when one starts this way. That's why I told her to study here, nearby because she can then live at home and not pay rent, and we'll be able to help her, because to be paying so much rent and travel and food, it'll make things more difficult.

However, they still valued education, and wanted Sofía to eventually graduate from college. As they looked at their options, the local community college seemed to be a very good option considering their situation. Mrs. Carrillo explained,

*Sus dos años de colegio y luego se van directamente a la universidad y que era lo mismo los dos primeros años de universidad que es lo mismo que les enseñan en el colegio. [Sus hermanas] le estuvieron diciendo, “es más económico, te va a salir más económico y es el mismo tiempo, te vas a salir igual,” pero ella le dijo que no. Le digo “bueno, como yo no sé, ellas son las que saben,” porque ellas pues ya entraron.*

Two years at the college and then heading to the university, and that the first two years at the university are the same as the first two years at the college. [Her sisters] thought it

was be much more economic to stay, but she said no. I told her, ‘Well, I don’t know much, they are the ones that know,’ because they already went to school.

Mr. Carrillo elaborated and said,

*Una de las razones porque me gustaría que estudiara aquí, porque se puede venir a quedar aquí y económicamente, no es mucho el gasto, y ahorita con la situación que tenemos, se pondría mucho más difícil. La otra es también para estar al pendiente y estar apoyando y dándole lo que podamos y lejos pues no sabemos. No es lo mismo ver las actividades que tiene a que nomás nos diga por teléfono ‘está pasando esto.’ Otra porque si necesita libros o le podemos ayudar aquí con las, porque ellos a veces se privan de muchas cosas porque les dan vergüenza por esto, por lo otro y estando aquí cercas, tal vez nosotros podemos ayudarle un poquito más con libros o con muchas cosas que necesitará y estando lejos no. Entonces a mi, lo personal, si me gustaría que fuera aquí cercas. Por aquí a lo cercas, puede ella misma manejar, ir y venir.*

One of the reasons why I would like for her to study here is because she could live here, and economically-speaking, it is not an added expense. Right now with our current situation, that would be easier for us. The other reason is so that we can keep an eye on her and support her, give her what we can, which is hard to do when she’s far. It won’t be the same to verify what she’s doing if she’s just telling us on the phone. Another reason is because if she needs books we can help her here, because sometimes they stop themselves from getting things they need because they are embarrassed to ask. Being here, close, maybe we can help a bit more with books or with things they need. So, for me, I’d like her to go somewhere near. She can also drive here.

Sofia's frustration with realizing the local community college might be her only option, especially considering her financial situation, began to affect her self-esteem. She shared why the local community college was not a desirable option, and said,

Having to settle for [the local community college], and the worst would be having to settle for a certain class. That would suck. It would. I think I deserve better than [that]. I've worked really hard, and I know I can do it. But I don't know if you've ever had those times where you know you can do something, but there's this crowd of people, they try to push you with that crowd of people and you feel like they're holding you down from doing something? That's how I feel if I go to [there]. I feel like I'm not going to get very far. I need to push myself to something that's higher so I can push myself to be able to do something better. That's the way I see it. I don't want to go to the local community college. I feel like that would be holding me down from doing something greater with what I want to do.

Sofia finally heard from her last four-year college option, CSU San Bernardino, about a month later. On this matter, she shared,

I talked to the school at San Bernardino, because they wouldn't—it was already past the days that they had been accepting people, you know how's there's that final day where if you didn't get in, you didn't get in? And I hadn't heard from them yes or no, so I called and they said that they were waiting on—something went wrong and they were waiting to fix it, and they said that they were going to get back at me. And when they finally did, they said that they didn't expect me because I was missing one of my A through G requirements. So I was just stuck with COD. It wasn't really an option. I didn't fail any of

the classes, but I got a D in chemistry, so that's what was holding me back. Just 'cause of that one class. I was so close!

Mrs. Carrillo's reaction was of disbelief, and she encouraged Sofia to go to CSU San Bernardino and argue the decision, but Sofia explained to her that nothing could be done. Mr. Carrillo's reaction simply was, "Too bad." However, despite the letdown and disappointment, Sofia saw to her last option, which was the local community college, explaining that she would not let it stop her from one day transferring to a four-year college. However, she did feel nervous about attending the local community college, not because of the rigor, but because the environment would not push her to excel. In the end, she enrolled in the community college and her new goal became transferring out as soon as possible.

In Sofia's case, she was fully committed to going to a four-year college and took the necessary steps to get there. She felt academically capable to attend college and knew she would be able to handle the responsibilities that came with leaving home. Unfortunately, the missing course requirement - that no counselor or Sofia herself ever caught in time - was the negotiating event that dashed her dreams and completely changed the playing field for her. The family dynamics within her family - and especially between Sofia and her dad - did not provide the support necessary to find ways to make her college dreams feasible. Furthermore, the seemingly bad communication between Sofia and her parents all contributed to a scenario full of confusion, misinterpretations, and perpetuated a difficult relationship between Sofia and her dad. In addition, Sofia's parents did not have the financial means or financial aid understanding to fight for her to go to college. In the end, although her intentions and goals were to go to college and she completed the requirements best she could, the negotiation of the college-going process resulted in the decision that Sofia would attend the local community college.



## **Conclusion**

The goal of this chapter was to advance our conversation around the CGP by focusing on how families negotiate their CGP as their realm of possibility changes. The following and final chapter will review the findings of this study and delve into the significance and implications of each.

## **Chapter 8: The Complexities of the College-Going Process for Latina/o Students and Parents: Discussion & Implications**

Like in many dissertation studies, the genesis of the research questions and study design begins as a thought born from observation, past literature, and unanswered questions. This study came about as a result of my time spent with Latina/o communities, the outreach I did at various high schools and youth centers, and from my understanding of past research on Latina/o college choice. Given the need to understand the complexity of the Latina/o CGP, I designed this study to address that need – especially given that in-depth qualitative studies needed to be conducted with both students and parents as the unit of analysis. What resulted was a study on family dynamics as they engaged in post-secondary decision-making.

This phenomenological study, using data drawn from 105 interviews with Latina/o students and parents and over the span of 12 months during the students' senior year of high school, explores the complexities of planning, navigating, and heading to college for Latina/o families. This final chapter will provide a review of the research findings and their significance, provide a succinct answer to the study's research questions, speak to the overall significance of the study, and discuss theoretical, policy, and practitioner implications. The chapter will end with a brief discussion on the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

### **Review of Findings and Significance**

**The emotional work behind the college-going process.** The first findings chapter presented in this study focused on the emotional work that students and parents engage in as they journeyed through the CGP; two sub-findings were highlighted. The first sub-finding not only focused on the emotions students and parents experienced when going through the CGP, but also discussed the ways in which student and parent familiarity of the U.S. higher education system

influenced how they faced the emotions brought upon by the CGP. The second sub-finding centered around the emotional roller coaster felt by families, and specifically on the fact that families with little to no knowledge of the U.S. higher education system experienced more extreme emotions. Overall, the emotional work students and parents do shows that not only do emotions held lead to particular actions in the midst of the CGP, but that the emotions experienced are a reflection of the family's knowledge and familiarity with the CGP. This, of course, highlights the impactful repercussions of having a lack of knowledge, awareness, or familiarity of the CGP.

What is significant about these findings is that the emotional journey of students and parents is of paramount importance to the CGP. The array of emotions students and parents felt during the CGP - including happiness, frustration, and accomplishment, among others - revealed that they are motivated by the emotions they felt, and thus, those emotions are a reflection of their comfort and familiarity with the CGP. In addition, these findings support the notion that understanding the emotional work that occurs during the CGP is crucial in our work with families to ensure a more successful and healthier CGP - regardless of their knowledge and experience with U.S. higher education.

**Expectations and their role in the college-going process.** The second findings chapter discussed in this study highlighted the varying expectations that influence the individual's perspective of the CGP, as well as how the expectations of the entire family impacts their experience and journey. Specifically, this chapter covered two sub-findings: the first sub-finding centered on college-going expectations, such as the purpose of going to college in order to achieve social mobility and going for the purpose of personal growth, while the second sub-finding focused on student and parent financial situations and sense of affordability as key

components of post-secondary decision-making. What the findings show is that the expectations parents have of their students are based on their own understanding of the purpose of college, their personal history, and their knowledge of their student. For example, for parents who previously experienced poverty or back-breaking jobs, college is seen as an opportunity to break that cycle; in other words, expectations are based on hopes for social mobility. Therefore, they expect their students to major in a career or profession that holds the promise to a better financial future. In return, students interpret the perceived - and real - expectations their parents have of them and make decisions about what they will study and where they will attend. The findings also show that student and parent perceptions on the affordability of their post-secondary educational options shape their thought process and decision-making. Particularly true for families with low financial means, the concern about heading to a distant college, for example, is one way in which financial concerns are manifested in their CGP. In these cases, parent and/or student discomfort on the distance of a desired higher education institution masks fears of not being able to afford visiting and other forms of travel, as well as masking concerns of paying for room and board. Perceptions on the actual monetary amount of the cost of any of these expenses may vary and be inaccurate. However, those perceptions and concerns are real enough that they influence the course of both the student's and parent's CGP by setting a boundary on what either of them believe is attainable.

These findings are evidence of the complexity of the CGP. Especially revelatory is the importance that the family unit has on the decision-making that occurs during the CGP. Previous research has shown that Latina/o parents play an important role in the students' CGP, however, these findings serve as evidence that not only are parents an important part of the CGP, but that they are an integral component and suggests that the familial unit experiences the CGP - not just

the individual student. In other words, the decisions made during the CGP are made with the input and expectations of both students and parents. In addition, the boundary-setting that occurs as expectations are made make a tangible impact on the options students and parents feel they have. This finding is incredibly important especially when considering the accuracy of the information that students and parents hold, and which we know can be an issue with first-generation college students and their families. The ways in which students and parents perceive and act upon their expectations, and make decisions through their realms of possibility, are critical in shaping their CGP journey, as well as our understanding of Latina/o CGP.

**Negotiations and the realm of possibility.** The final findings chapter in this study focused on the negotiations that students and parents make based on their realm of possibility as they journey through the CGP. Following the line of thinking from Chapter 6, this chapter used select family stories to showcase the complexities in planning, navigating, and overall negotiating in the CGP. Students and parents encountered day-to-day events that influenced how they perceived their current situations and the decisions they take - the events can fall under environmental and internal categories, such as unexpected employment, unstable financial situation, missing or meeting application deadlines, admissions decisions, divorce, and deaths in the family, among others. The negotiation of these various events, or how students and parents “deal with it,” in the face of how they perceive their realm of possibility to be shows how complex the CGP is. Furthermore, it is important to note that power dynamics within the negotiation can shift, especially as a student and parent learn more about college-going. Observed more so towards the end of the CGP, students and parents challenged each other on their plans and realms of possibility. Using the Marin family as an example, once Luisa went on a campus visit and began to gather more information on the CGP, there was a shift in the power

dynamics and the discussion changed because of the new knowledge that was gained. The experiences shared by parents and students exemplified that the realm of possibility is fluid, changes over time as new events come up, and is constantly present (See Figure 2). This results in constant negotiating as the CGP goes on.

Knowing how the negotiations and realms of possibility function provides a window into how events - small or large - can greatly influence student and parent CGP. This frame of understanding provides multiple opportunities for researchers and practitioners to create programs, curriculum, and policy that demystifies the CGP and provides assistance as students and parents negotiate and form their ever-changing perceptions of what is possible. Perhaps even more importantly, this chapter sheds light on the importance of delivering *timely* assistance to students and parents, as we know that the CGP is a time-sensitive process.

### **Research Questions Answered & Significance**

If we reconsider the research questions that guided this study, we find that the answers are far more nuanced than expected. The first research question posited: How do Latina/o students and their parent(s), as a unit, experience the college-going process during the student's senior year of high school? Based on the research findings, the CGP can be seen as a shared, familial process that involves emotional work, and as a process where decisions are made based on expectations, the negotiation of daily and life events, and their realm of possibility. In regard to the familial process, it is important to reflect on the fact that although most of the steps and work necessary to apply to and enter college comes from the student, what the parents vocalize and perceive is of great importance because parents help create both the base environment in which college-going decisions will be made, and in addition, are part of the negotiations of college-going decisions. Of course, the family's socioeconomic situation, their access to

resources, the quality of their education, and their awareness of college-going in general will have profound effects on both students and parents.

The second research question asked: How do their respective perspectives, expectations, aspirations, and overall perceptions of their realm of possibilities come into play with each other during their college-planning process? For the Latina/os students and parents involved in this study, their family history and dynamics, emotions, expectations, and negotiations during the college-planning process all form a delicate environment that serves as the foundation for the decision-making that will ensue. Both Latina/o students and parents have their own experience with education, develop ideas on the purpose and value of attaining a higher education, which interact with the family's history and its existing dynamics, as well as their realm of possibility. Events such as those related to the college application and admissions process, loss of employment and divorce among others, greatly influenced their realm of possibility, and therefore, the decisions they made. These events change the boundaries of what is possible - or the realm of possibility - and these changes are continuous (See Figure 2).

One of the most interesting aspects of this study - and the study design decision with the most impact - is the qualitative and longitudinal scope of its data collection. The CGP, if understood as a process and not merely a decision made on a single point in time, is a process that spans over many months and through numerous points of change (See Figure 2). As previously invoked during the discussion on the realm of possibility, events that occur on day-to-day basis, or sporadically, act as "game changers" for the student and parent CGP. Designing a study in which data was collected in between periods of points of change was crucial in capturing the necessary data to support the ideas of negotiation and realms of possibility. It was through this design that it became evident that students and parents were affected by many

events happening in their lives, and that in fact, the CGP can be a treacherous journey if there is a lack of knowledge, unexpected environmental influences, unstable financial situations, or little institutional support from high schools and colleges. Simply put, the design of this study allowed for the observation of the evolution of the decision-making process and how students and parents weathered these environmental and personal buffers. Furthermore, when considering first-generation college students, the negotiations that must be made and the ever-changing realm of possibility have an incredible emotional impact. As exemplified through the stories of several families, the possibility of attending college is a dream and an undertaking onto itself, but when a game changer is introduced, the negotiation of it can mean the end of a dream - or at the very least, an unexpected setback. It is this revelation that heightens the importance of understanding the entirety of the CGP - from the emotional work to the negotiations made. Without this understanding, we risk missing the opportunity to envision innovative ways of supporting students and parents through the CGP.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study challenge scholars and practitioners to envision new ways of developing interventions that will lead to higher numbers of Latina/o student enrollment in higher education institutions, while re-thinking college-going as a family process as opposed to an individual one. In addition to giving Latina/o students and parents college-related information, such as knowledge on admissions processes and financial aid, it is also necessary for scholars and practitioners to consider family history, family dynamics, as well as emotions, expectations, and realms of possibility as important components of the educational trajectory of a Latina/o student.



**Research & theoretical implications.** The findings from this research study contribute to the field of college access and choice in several ways. First, this study presents a design that encompasses a longitudinal view of the CGP. The findings reveal that the CGP is a complex process that is nuanced and easily influenced by environmental and internal events. The findings also showed that a lot of emotional work is done through the CGP, and that it is a very personal journey that students and parents go through. As scholars and researchers, these perspectives re-focus the way in which college-going is studied. Single-point data collection will not capture the process students and parents go through, nor will it capture the shifts in perception, perspective, and realm of possibility that occur as time goes by and events occur. Qualitative studies seeking to investigate the CGP must consider the long-term nature of the process and aim at incorporating it in their study design.

Second, the data gathered through this study both affirms previous research findings and makes significant contributions to existing knowledge on the CGP. Just like Hossler and Gallagher (1987) found, parental levels of education, encouragement, and support, were all found to be influential in the predisposition and choice phases. However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the data from this study serves as evidence that parents are a crucial and integral part to the CGP. The data serves as evidence that both students and parents engage in the months-long decision-making process related to their educational endeavors, as well as highlight that parental knowledge, encouragement, and support continue to have an influence as the CGP progresses and negotiations continue. In addition, this study also situates the negotiation process as a central occurrence in the CGP that no other researcher or theorist has brought forth.

In addition, previous research studies have found that parents often have doubts on how their student will navigate college (Alvarez, 2015; Auerbach, 2004; Fann et al., 2009), the

maturity level of their student (Alvarez, 2015; Auerbach, 2004), and whether going far away from home is the correct choice to make (Alvarez, 2015; Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Perez & McDonough, 2008). This study adds a more nuanced perspective on parents' concerns with a much-needed in-depth discussion as to the reasoning of those concerns and their effects on parent and student decision-making. One example previously discussed are the concerns surrounding distance from home, which this study finds to be related to perceptions of affordability of lodging and travel, as well as having access to the student in case of illness. The presentation of these findings adds dimension to our knowledge of doubts and concerns parents have through the CGP.

Moreover, this study's findings have also contributed to our finance-related knowledge. Much like discussed by Muñoz and Rincon (2015), Latino students whose parents have a college degree and hold a higher socioeconomic status - just like the Cuellar family in this study - enrollment to a four-year institution is more likely. The findings of this study contribute to our knowledge by finding that increased student knowledge and familiarity of the CGP results in a less stressful and smoother transition into higher education.

Finally, this study is an important contribution to the study of Latina/o college-going because of its in-depth analysis on how parents and students engage in the CGP. The findings of this study provide increased detail on parental aspirations, a topic of investigation for Ceja (2001, 2004) and Azmitia and Brown (2002). Furthermore, the findings in this study support findings centered on explicit/implicit messages, which were first discussed by Ceja (2004). Within the scope of this dissertation, Ceja's findings can be understood as messages that are sent between students and parents and are either verbally expressed or expressed through actions or behaviors.

These messages, in turn, can result in the (mis)interpretation of expectations, perspectives, and aspirations, and thus leading to an additional negotiating element in the CGP.

This dissertation study also provides a contribution to our theoretical understanding of the CGP. The concept of familismo is seen through the negotiation of the CGP. Although Sy and Romero (2008) stipulate that the loyalty and closeness within the family unit is manifested as the child putting the needs of the family first, this study finds that family and personal needs are negotiated, and do not necessarily involve the family needs always trumping the personal needs. It is also important to note that the loyalty and closeness emphasized in familismo is evident in the inclusion of parents within the CGP.

This study also adds to the field by conceptualizing the amorphous “bubble” in which decision-making occurs in the CGP. In considering the realm of possibility, we are asked to think about the daily and large-scale events that influence what students and parents think at any given time during their CGP, as well as how they make a series of decisions regarding their post-secondary educational choices. The realm of possibility is fluid and can change at any moment. When placed within the confines of the college application process, we realize that any single event has the potential to throw students and parents for a loop, leading them to either miss a college application deadline, apply to a university they never considered, or attend an institution of their dreams. We also realize that the CGP is a delicate, time-dependent process in which many things must go right in order for a student to successfully attend college. Therefore, at any point where structural, emotional, and parental support is missing, therein lies a risk that the student may not successfully enter the U.S. higher education system. It is my hope that future scholarship considers this concept and creates ways to increase college access for Latinas/os in the U.S.

**Policy implications.** Policy implications for this study include the creation of guidelines at the district level to support the aforementioned practice implications. Helpful to Latina/o students and parents would be the implementation of college/career centers in every high school that would not only offer informational workshops regarding application and financial aid processes, but would provide an environment for emotional support as they engage in the college-going negotiation process. In addition, and as many times suggested by scholars and practitioners, increased funding for outreach and program creation at the K-12 and university levels would go a long way in facilitating the pipeline of Latina/o students into higher education. Furthermore, following any of these suggestions would build a sense of inclusion for parents who may have otherwise felt marginalized from their children's education or from the U.S. educational system itself.

**Practical implications.** Given the findings of this study, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners must understand that any single event can throw a family's CGP off course. Therefore, we must create strategies that help support students and parents through the CGP. Implications for practice include areas of high school programming, community and city involvement, and outreach by higher education institutions. At the high school level, schools can continue their college-going efforts by following through with students and parents past major events, such as the application deadline period, Intent to Register deadlines, and submitting FAFSA. If a high school already has college and financial application help programs in place, they can continue to provide support as students and their parents engage in a lot of decision-making that will impact their future greatly.

Something that became apparent when talking to the students and parents in this study was the existence of fear and nervousness around the "unknown" of going to college. Parents

with little to no U.S. higher education experience felt uneasy about finding ways to pay for college, especially in the cases when the parents had no idea – or far-fetched ideas – of how much college would cost. In addition, some parents felt unsure of how their students would fare in the case of illness or danger. In knowing that Latina/o students and parents put a lot of thought and effort into negotiating the college-going process, high schools and city officials (via teen centers, community/cultural centers, or career programs) can provide a structured environment in which to discuss and solve the issues that families, as a unit, must confront. High schools and city officials can establish student-parent symposiums and talking circles where school officials invite high school graduates (both those who have gone to college and those who have not) and their parents to facilitate conversations around the issues presented in this chapter. This type of support could be one simple solution in assuaging fears that Latina/o students and parents may hold when determining their students' postsecondary educational paths. Furthermore, this strategy places the responsibility on both the educational institution and the city, wherein both have a healthy investment in educating their residents. In addition, this strategy could create a sense of community as they make a cohesive effort to access the U.S. higher education system.

Similarly, higher education institutions can create their own version of these student-parent symposiums as they reach out to high schools via their admissions presentations or during their Open House events. University alumni associations can contact current alumni and ask the alumni to bring their parents to the Open House events with the goal of connecting parents of alumni with parents of prospective students. These symposia do not all have to be on the college campus - in fact, they could occur as events sponsored by alumni clubs or at satellite campuses.

Higher education institutions can also develop group-specific programming that targets prospective first-generation college students and include the student-parent symposia as part of

their agenda. Student-parent sleep-over weekends are also a great way for parents to experience a morsel of the college environment and familiarize themselves with the campus.

Regardless of the type programming offered by higher education institutions, administrators must find a way to create a personal connection with parents. Administrators must assure parents that the institution will take care of their students, and they must do so in Spanish - especially if talking to first-generation college goers. Ensuring that parents feel comforted in the fact that their student will be taken care of goes a long way in terms of making families feel at ease with sending their student to college.

The implications discussed and recommendations presented are all viable ways of ensuring that high schools, cities, and higher education institutions re-direct information and efforts toward Latina/o families in a manner that has high impact. Doing so communicates the message that the community as a whole is committed to fulfilling their role of educating our populous.

### **Limitations & Future Research**

It is always the case that regardless of how well thought out a study may be limitations will still restrict the applicability of the study's results. Due to the nature of qualitative studies, the results obtained through this study are applicable to only those who have similar backgrounds and circumstances as the participants. However, the true value of a qualitative study such as this is in the quality and depth of the data – that is, the details that are shared by the research participant with the researcher bring to life the human experiences of the college-going process.

That being said, limitations of this study include having a small sample size, and being located in an environment that is more rural than urban, which due to the tendency of there being a larger number of higher education institutions in urban areas, will most likely affect the ways

in which Latina/o students and parents experience the CGP and engage in the exchange of perspectives, expectations, and overall perceptions throughout that same time period. Despite these limitations, the data gathered through this study is of enough quality to successfully contribute to our current knowledge of the Latina/o student and parent CGP.

Suggested future lines of research are numerous. These include investigating the realm of possibility on a sample that includes a higher number of middle-class Latina/o families in order to fully understand their unique experience given their socioeconomic level and lower likelihood of receiving federal financial aid. In addition, expanding this study to the undocumented student and parent population would bring to the forefront a distinctive perspective on college-going, especially when considering their realm of possibility. This line of research would add a complex layer of transnational politics and the complexities of the immigration system in the U.S.

Focusing on the differences between aspirations and expectations would also be beneficial to our understanding of Latina/o CGP. There are different ways of understanding how aspirations differ from expectations, and the differences (or similarities) depend on the particular scenario each family is facing. The protocol for this study's data collection captures both aspirations and expectations, however, the differences were not fully explored in this dissertation. Additional analysis and writing will be a valuable contribution to the development of this line of inquiry. Finally, further writing on educational decision-making is necessary. An application of the Blood-Wolfe Composite Index of Marital Satisfaction (1960) on educational matters and the CGP could be an opportunity to understand educational decisions in a very complex and nuanced way. Using such a rich data set that includes both students and parents could be a very insightful contribution to the field of Education.

## **Conclusion**

For Latina/o parents, their children's college-planning process is really their own too. For those who always wished they had had the opportunity to go to college but never were able to, this becomes a way for them to achieve that goal – that is, by living vicariously through their children and realizing their own goal. For those parents who always wanted to go to college but never went, this process becomes a personal process because they have equal, if not more, at stake than their children. In speaking to the parents who participated in this study, it was quite palpable that for the parents who never got that opportunity, who were forced to immigrate, and struggled a great deal in order to give their children even a shot at that opportunity, the possibility of their children attending college was incredibly meaningful. For those parents who themselves had the opportunity to enroll in college, the CGP symbolizes an opportunity to create a new cycle of social mobility through education.

A further thought to consider is the uniqueness of college decision-making. This process is a culmination of 12 years of work (or more) for students, as well as the culmination of goals parents have had for years. This process also leads to a very important life decision that has life-long personal, emotional, and financial impacts. There have long been deficit-thinking theories that identified Latina/o families as not caring about education, therefore faulting them for the low rates in educational attainment in the K-20 pipeline. However, in light of this study's findings and the findings of many other empirical studies, that ideology does not hold true. Moreover, the CGP is such a unique process that no stereotype can be applied to it. During the CGP, not only is decision-making happening within the family structure, but there are other environmental forces affecting it. Due to its time-sensitive nature, things like missing a deadline or not fully completing application requirements, have incredible effects on the college-going trajectory of the student and parents.



This dissertation study provides a three-dimensional perspective on the uniqueness of the CGP. The study delivers a strong sense of the individuals involved, the family dynamics, the debates and discussions, and how they feel through it all. This now begs the question: So what? Why does this information matter? The CGP is a process. It changes over time, it is affected by game-changers, and has a deep emotional impact on the individuals involved. When we examine how college-related information is disseminated, so often the focus is on the students. Although the student is the one ultimately attending college, they do not experience it in a vacuum. They experience it with their parents. Parents play a strong role in the decision-making process, and their perceptions, expectations, and communication all influence how the CGP unfolds. The CGP is experienced as a unit. Therefore, college-related resources must reach the parents just as they do students.

This study explores the family unit as a crucial aspect of Latina/o college-going – an aspect far more important than previously asserted through research – as well as the emotions, expectations, negotiations made as the realm of possibility changes. Through the narratives told of each family, we see the negotiation of various events, and weaved through all are the complex emotions and perceptions caused by the context and process themselves. This study adds to the growing number of studies focusing on Latina/o college-going that use familial capital and other forms of knowing by discussing this process as one in which the family expectations and perceptions are incorporated. Given the need for a re-conceptualization of Latina/o college-going and the methodological gap in research design, this phenomenological study contributes to the field by asking direct questions regarding the experience of the family unit through the college-going process. As scholars, thinkers, and individuals charged with the responsibility to

develop a full understanding of phenomenon, we owe it to our communities to thoroughly investigate the CGP and create pathways through which to increase college-going.

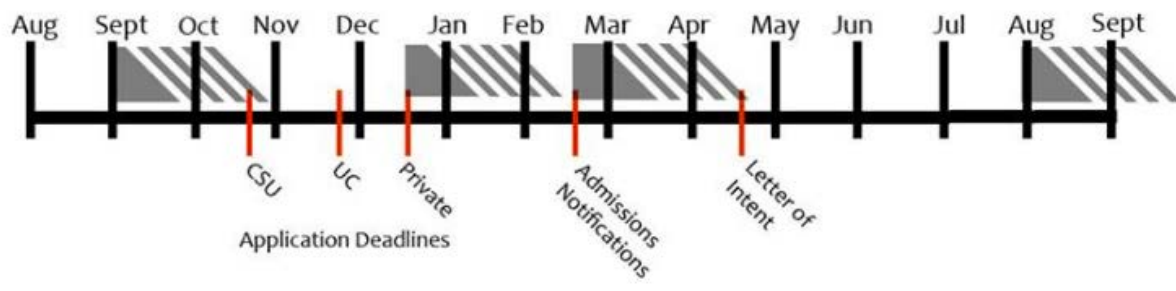


Figure 1. Data collection periods.

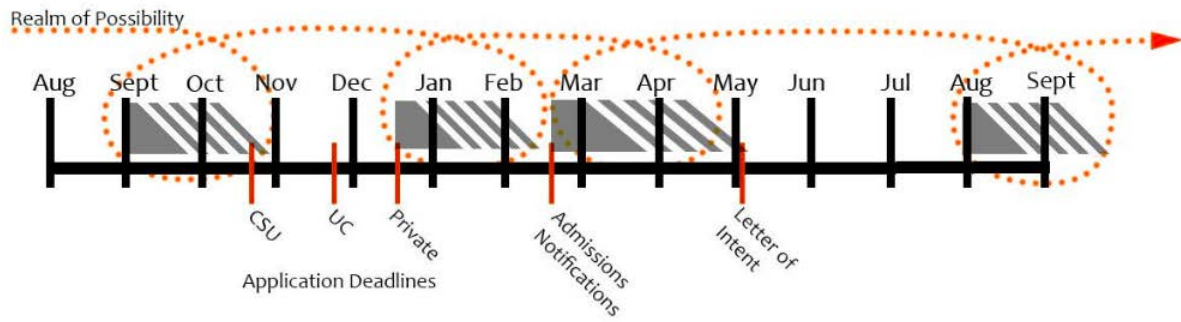


Figure 2. The Realm of Possibility within the study design.

## Appendix A: Phase 1 Parent Protocols

### Parents Data Collection Phase #1: Before Nov. 30, 2011, before applying

- PRE-DISPOSITIONS TO COLLEGE
  - What is your level of education? Where did you go to school?
  - When did you start talking about college? What prompted you to start talking about college?
  - Do you have any close relatives who have gone to college or whose children have gone to college?
  - Do you have any other children who have had aspirations or have applied for college? (Probe on those experiences)
- PERCEPTIONS ON COLLEGE
  - How is your child doing in school? Where do you see that going? (Probe on current expectations of child)
  - What is college like? What is it all about?
  - What are the benefits of college?
- COMMUNICATION WITH CHILD
  - What things have you and your child talked about regarding college?
  - How often do you and your child discuss college or any future education? Can you give me a sense of what those conversations are like?
  - Have you had conversations with your child on what you expect will happen this year?
    - How about on what you expect will happen post-high school?
- PERCEPTIONS ON WHAT CHILD IS PLANNING & EXPECTATIONS
  - Which colleges do you think your child is considering? (Probe on what schools they encouraged & discouraged her/him to apply)
  - What would you like to see your child achieve educationally?
  - What do you hope will happen this year in terms of your child going to college?
  - What do you expect will happen this year in terms of your child going to college? (Probe on their perception of their child's capabilities in meeting those expectations)
  - Can you share with me existing concerns or fears about your child considering/going to college?

## **Padres Colección de datos fase #1: Antes del 30 de noviembre, 2011, antes de aplicar**

- **PRE-DISPOSICIONES**
  - Cual es su nivel de educación? Dónde es que estudió?
  - Cuando empezó a hablar sobre la universidad? Qué fue lo que inició esas conversaciones?
  - Tiene familiares que han ido a la universidad ó que tengan hijos que han ido a la universidad?
  - Tiene otros hijos que han querido ir a la universidad ó que han aplicado a la universidad? (Seguir preguntando sobre esas experiencias)
- **PERCEPCIONES SOBRE LA UNIVERSIDAD**
  - Cómo le va a su hija/o en la escuela? A donde piensa que ella va a llegar? (Seguir preguntando sobre lo que espera de su hija/o)
  - Cómo piensa que es la universidad? De que se trata?
  - Cuales son los beneficios de ir a la universidad?
- **COMUNICACIÓN CON LA/EL HIJA/O**
  - De que han hablado usted y su hija/o sobre la universidad?
  - Que seguido hablan usted y su hija/o sobre la universidad ó de seguir estudiando? Me puede dar a entender cómo son estas conversaciones?
  - Ha tenido conversaciones con su hija/o sobre lo que usted espera que pase este año?
    - Que tal de lo que espera que pase después de que se gradúe de la preparatoria?

## Appendix B: Phase 1 Youth Protocols

### Student Data Collection Phase #1: Before Nov. 30, 2011, before applying

- PRE-DISPOSITIONS TO COLLEGE
  - How has your family talked about education in the past?
  - What are the kinds of things that you have learned about higher education from your family?
  - Who has been the most influential person in thinking about college?
  - Do you have any other siblings or close relatives that have gone to college? (Probe on influence)
- PERCEPTIONS ON COLLEGE
  - What do you see yourself achieving after high school?
  - What is college going to be like? What is it all about?
  - What do you see are the benefits of college?
  - How long have you been thinking about college?
    - What got you thinking about college?
- EXPECTATIONS ON WHAT MAY HAPPEN
  - Which colleges are you planning to apply to?
  - How have you come to these choices? (Probe on factors such as distance, finances, grades, fit, etc.)
  - What do you hope will happen this year in terms of you going to college?
  - What do you expect will happen this year in terms of you going to college?
  - Do you have any worries or concerns about college? What are they, if any?
- COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS
  - Which family members have been involved in this college-going discussion?
  - Have you talked to your parents about your idea of what college is?
  - How often do you and your parents discuss college?
  - Have you talked to your parents about your college hopes?
  - Have you talked to your parents about what you expect will happen this year?
  - Have they said anything on what they hope college is going to be like for you?
- PERCEPTIONS ON WHAT PARENTS THINK
  - What do you think your parents think about college? What about you considering college?

## **Colección de datos fase #1: Antes del 30 de noviembre, 2011, antes de aplicar**

- **PRE-DISPOSICIONES**
  - En tiempos pasados, como ha hablado tu familia sobre la educación?
  - Que cosas has aprendido de tu familia sobre la universidad?
  - Quien a sido la persona más influyente en términos de ayudarte a pensar sobre la universidad?
  - Tienes hermanos ó miembros familiares que han ido a la universidad? (Seguir preguntando sobre sus influencias)
- **PERCEPCIONES SOBRE LA UNIVERSIDAD**
  - Que te vez logrando después de terminar la preparatoria?
  - Explícame como piensas que será la universidad. De que se trata?
  - Que vez que sean los beneficios de ir a la universidad?
  - Por cuanto tiempo has estado pensando sobre la universidad?
    - Que fue lo que primero te ayudo a pensar sobre la universidad?
- **EXPECTATIVAS DE LO QUE PASARA**
  - A cuales universidades planeas aplicar?
  - Como llegaste a esas decisiones? (Seguir preguntando sobre factores como distancia, finanzas, grados, adecuado, etc.)
  - Que deseas que pase este año en términos de ir a la universidad?
  - Que esperas que pase este año en términos de ir a la universidad?
  - Tienes algunas preocupaciones sobre la universidad? Si hay algunos, cuales son?
- **COMUNICACIÓN CON LOS PADRES**
  - Cuales miembros de familia se han involucrado en la discusión de ir a la universidad?
  - Has hablado con tus padres sobre tus ideas de lo que es una universidad?
  - Que seguido hablan tú y tus padres sobre la universidad?
  - Has hablado con tus padres sobre tus deseos universitales?
  - Has hablado con tus padres sobre lo que esperas que pase este año?
  - Han dicho lo que ellos desean que sea la universidad para ti?
- **PERCEPCIONES DE LO QUE PIENSAN LOS PADRES**
  - Que piensas tú que tus padres piensan sobre la universidad? Que tal de que tu estés considerando ir a la universidad?



## Appendix C: Phase 2 Parent Protocols

### Data Collection Phase #2: Jan. 8, 2012 – Feb. 28, 2012, after applying, before hearing

- PERCEPTIONS ON COLLEGE (CHANGE?)
  - How is your child doing in school? Where do you see that going? (Probe on current expectations of child)
  - What is college like? What is it all about?
  - What are the benefits of college?
- COMMUNICATION WITH CHILD (CHANGE?)
  - Since we last talked, have you and your child talked more, less, or the same about college and any future plans?
  - Can you give me a sense of what those conversations are like?
  - Have you had conversations with your child on what you expect will happen this year?
    - How about on what you expect will happen post-high school?
- PERCEPTIONS ON WHAT CHILD IS PLANNING & EXPECTATIONS (CHANGE?)
  - Which colleges do you think your child has applied to? (Probe on what schools they encouraged & discouraged her/him to apply)
  - What would you like to see your child achieve educationally?
  - What do you hope will happen this year in terms of your child going to college?
  - What do you expect will happen this year in terms of your child going to college? (Probe on their perception of their child's capabilities in meeting those expectations and on the comfort/reasons behind expectations)
  - Can you share with me existing concerns or fears about your child considering/going to college?

**Padres Colección de datos fase #2: 8 de enero, 2012 – 28 de febrero, 2012, después de aplicar, antes de escuchar**

- PERCEPCIONES SOBRE LA UNIVERSIDAD (CAMBIO?)
  - Cómo le va a su hija/o en la escuela? A donde piensa que ella va a llegar? (Seguir preguntando sobre lo que espera de su hija/o)
  - Como piensa que es la universidad? De que se trata?
  - Cuales son los beneficios de ir a la universidad?
- COMUNICACIÓN CON LA/EL HIJA/O (CAMBIO?)
  - Desde la ultima vez que hablamos, que seguido ha hablado con su hija/o sobre la universidad y sus planes futuros? Más, menos ó igual? (Seguir preguntando sobre lo que espera de su hija/o)
  - Me puede dar a entender como son estas conversaciones?
  - Ha tenido conversaciones con su hija/o sobre lo que usted espera que pase este año?
    - Que tal de lo que espera que pase después de que se gradúe de la preparatoria?
- PERCEPCIONES DE LO QUE PLANEA LA/EL HIJA/O Y EXPECTATIVAS (CAMBIO?)
  - A cuales universidades su hija/o aplicó?
  - Que es lo que espera de su hija/o en términos académicos?
  - Que es lo que desea que ocurra este año en términos de que su hija/o vaya a la universidad? (Seguir preguntado sobre las universidades que más le gusta y las razones por eso)
  - Que es lo que espera que ocurra este año en términos de que su hija/o vaya a la universidad? (Seguir preguntando sobre la capacidad de que su hija/o alcance esas expectativas y las razones de tras de esas expectativas)
  - Tiene usted alguna preocupación o temor de que su hija/o considere/vaya a la universidad?

## Appendix D: Phase 2 Youth Protocols

### Data Collection Phase #2: Jan. 8, 2012 – Feb. 28, 2012, after applying, before hearing

- EXPECTATIONS ON WHAT MAY HAPPEN (CHANGE?)
  - Which colleges did you end up applying to?
  - [If they didn't apply to college]
    - How did you come to the decision of not applying to college? (Probe on influencing factors such as distance, finances, grades, fit, etc.)
    - What are your current plans on what you'll be doing after high school?
  - [If they applied to college]
    - How did you come to these choices? (Probe on influencing factors such as distance, finances, grades, fit, etc.)
    - Have you thought about the different scenarios that can happen in terms of being accepted or rejected from the schools you applied to?
  - What do you hope will happen this year in terms of you going to college?
  - What do you expect will happen this year in terms of you going to college?
  - Do you have any worries or concerns about achieving your post-high school plans? What are they, if any?
- PERCEPTIONS ON COLLEGE (CHANGE?)
  - Have you had a change in idea of what college is going to be like?
  - What new things have you learned about college?
  - [If they didn't apply to college] Do you see yourself going to college in the future?
- COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS (CHANGE?)
  - Have you talked to your parents about what you expect will happen this year?
  - Have you talked to your parents about your current post-high school options and plans?
  - Have your parents said anything on what they hope college is going to be like for you?
  - Have any other family members been involved in your school plans after high school?
- PERCEPTIONS ON WHAT PARENTS THINK (CHANGE?)
  - [If they didn't apply to college] What do you think your parents think about your school-related plans?
  - [If they applied to college] What do you think your parents think about the schools you applied to?

**Estudiante Colección de datos fase #2: 8 de enero, 2012 – 28 de febrero, 2012, después de aplicar, antes de escuchar**

- EXPECTATIVAS DE LO QUE PASARA (CAMBIO?)
  - A cuales universidades aplicaste?
  - [Si no aplico a la universidad]
    - Como llegaste a esas decisiones? (Seguir preguntando sobre factores como distancia, finanzas, grados, adecuado, etc.)
    - En este momento, que planes tienes cuando termines la preparatoria?
  - [Si aplico a la universidad]
    - Como llegaste a esas decisiones? (Seguir preguntando sobre factores como distancia, finanzas, grados, adecuado, etc.)
    - Has pensado sobre los diferentes escenarios que pueden ocurrir en términos de ser aceptada/o o rechazada/o por las universidades a las que aplicaste?
  - Que deseas que pase este año en términos de ir a la universidad?
  - Que esperas que pase este año en términos de ir a la universidad?
  - Tienes algunas preocupaciones sobre tus planes después de la preparatoria? Si hay algunos, cuales son?
- PERCEPCIONES SOBRE LA UNIVERSIDAD (CAMBIO?)
  - Has cambiado de idea de cómo será la universidad?
  - Que cosas nuevas has aprendido sobre la universidad?
  - [Si no aplico a la universidad] Piensas que en un futuro iras a la universidad?
- COMUNICACIÓN CON LOS PADRES (CAMBIO?)
  - Has hablado con tus padres sobre lo que esperas que pase este año?
  - Has hablado con tus padres sobre tus opciones y planes después de la preparatoria?
  - Tus padres han dicho que es lo que desean que sea la universidad para ti?
  - Se han involucrado algún otros miembros familiares en decidir tus planes después de la preparatoria?
- PERCEPCIONES DE LO QUE PIENSAN LOS PADRES (CAMBIO?)
  - [Si no aplico a la universidad] Que piensas tu que tus padres piensan sobre tus futuros planes escolares?
  - [Si aplico a la universidad] Que piensas tu que tus padres piensan sobre las universidades a las cuales tu aplicaste?

## Appendix E: Phase 3 Parent Protocols

### Data Collection Phase #3: Mar. 1, 2012 – May 1, 2012, after hearing, while choosing

- PERCEPTIONS ON COLLEGE (CHANGE?)
  - How is your child doing in school? Where do you see that going? (Probe on current expectations of child)
  - What is college like? What is it all about?
  - What are the benefits of college?
- COMMUNICATION WITH CHILD (CHANGE?)
  - Since we last talked, have you and your child talked more, less, or the same about college and any future plans?
  - Can you give me a sense of what those conversations are like?
  - Have you spoken to your child about your current hopes regarding her/his post-high school plans?
  - Have you had conversations with your child on what you expect will happen this year?
  - Whose voices have been involved in the conversation?
  - In your point of view, do you think any one member of the family's input had more value than others? Who? Why do you think that is?
- PERCEPTIONS ON WHAT CHILD IS PLANNING & EXPECTATIONS (CHANGE?)
  - What would you like to see your child achieve educationally?
  - Has your child been accepted to any colleges?
  - What path or choice do you think your child will follow?
  - What do you hope will happen this year in terms of your child going to college? (Probe on what schools they encouraged & discouraged her/him to attend and the comfort/reasons behind it)
    - If you had your wish, what would you like her to do? Where would you like her to go?
  - What do you expect will happen this year in terms of your child going to college (Probe on their perception of their child's capabilities in meeting those expectations and on the comfort/reasons behind expectations)
  - Can you share with me existing concerns or fears about your child considering/going to college?
  - [If child is accepted to one or more schools]
    - In what ways are you currently/planning to learn more about the schools that your child was accepted to? (Probe on planned campus visits, pamphlets, meetings, etc.)
    - Will you encourage or discourage attendance for any reason? (Probe on factors such as distance, finances, etc.)
  - [If child did not apply OR if accepted to no schools]
    - Do you have any recommendations on what your child should do?
    - How do you see your child moving forward from here?
    - Will you still encourage your child to reapply in the future?
  - How are you going about making these school/college-related choices?

**Colección de datos fase #3: 1 de marzo, 2012 – 1 de mayo, 2012, después de escuchar, mientras eligen**

- PERCEPCIONES SOBRE LA UNIVERSIDAD (CAMBIO?)
  - Cómo le va a su hija/o en la escuela? A donde piensa que ella va a llegar? (Seguir preguntando sobre lo que espera de su hija/o)
  - Como piensa que es la universidad? De que se trata?
  - Cuales son los beneficios de ir a la universidad?
- COMUNICACIÓN CON LA/EL HIJA/O (CAMBIO?)
  - Desde la ultima vez que hablamos, que seguido ha hablado con su hija/o sobre la universidad y sus planes futuros? Más, menos ó igual? (Seguir preguntando sobre lo que espera de su hija/o)
  - Me puede dar a entender como son estas conversaciones?
  - Ha tenido conversaciones sobre lo que usted espera que ocurra después de que se gradúe de la preparatoria?
  - Ha tenido conversaciones con su hija/o sobre lo que usted espera que pase este año?
  - Quienes son las personas que se han involucrado en estas conversaciones?
  - Desde su punto de vista, cual es el miembro de familia al que su hija/hijo más le ha hecho caso? Por que cree que es así?
- PERCEPCIONES DE LO QUE PLANEA LA/EL HIJA/O Y EXPECTATIVAS
  - Que es lo que espera de su hija/o en términos académicos?
  - Cuales universidades aceptaron a su hija/o?
  - Que decisión piensa que su hija/o tomará?
  - Que es lo que desea que ocurra este año en términos de que su hija/o vaya a la universidad? (Seguir preguntado sobre las universidades que más le gusta y las razones por eso)
    - Si tuviera un deseo, que es lo que quisiera que ella/el decidiera? A donde le gustaría que ella/el fuera?
  - Que es lo que espera que ocurra este año en términos de que su hija/o vaya a la universidad? (Seguir preguntando sobre la capabilidad de que su hija/o alcance esas expectativas y las razones por esas expectativas)
  - Tiene usted alguna preocupación o temor de que su hija/o considere/vaya a la universidad?
  - [Si hija/o fue aceptada/o a una o más universidades]
    - En que manera esta planeando en aprender más sobre las universidades a las cuales su hija/o fue aceptada/o? (Seguir preguntando sobre visitas planeadas a las universidades, folletos, juntas, etc.)
    - Usted apoyará ó no apoyará a su hija/o que vaya a la universidad por cualquier razón? (Seguir preguntando sobre factores como distancia, finanzas, etc.)
  - [Si hija/o no fue aceptada/o a una universidad O no aplico a la universidad]
    - Usted le tiene alguna recomendación sobre lo que su hija/o debería hacer?
    - Como mira que ella/el seguirá al frente desde este momento?
    - Usted la apoyaría a volver a aplicar en el futuro?
  - Como se están haciendo estas decisiones?

## Appendix F: Phase 3 Youth Protocols

### Student Data Collection Phase #3: Mar. 1, 2012 – May 1, 2012, after hearing, while choosing

- EXPECTATIONS ON WHAT MAY HAPPEN (CHANGE?)
  - [If they applied to college] Have you heard from the colleges you applied to?
  - [If they applied to college, were accepted]
    - Which are you more inclined to attend? (Probe on comfort with choices and reasons for them)
    - [What factors are you considering in choosing a college? (Probe on factors such as distance, finances, etc.)
    - How did you come to these choices? (Probe on influencing factors such as distance, finances, grades, fit, etc.)
    - In what ways are you currently/planning to learn more about the schools that you were accepted to? (Probe on planned campus visits, pamphlets, meetings, etc.)
  - [If they applied to college, were rejected OR didn't apply to college]
    - What are your current plans on what you'll be doing after high school?
    - How likely is it that these plans will become a reality?
    - Do you think you will reapply in the future?
  - What do you hope will happen this year in terms of you going to college?
  - What do you expect will happen this year in terms of you going to college?
  - Do you have any worries or concerns about achieving your post-high school plans? What are they, if any?
- PERCEPTION ON WHAT COLLEGE IS (CHANGE?)
  - Have you had a change in idea of what college is going to be like?
  - What new things have you learned about college?
- COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS (CHANGE?)
  - Have you talked to your parents about what you expect will happen this year?
  - Have you talked to your parents about your current post-high school options and plans?
  - [If they applied to college, were accepted] Have your parents said anything on what they hope college is going to be like for you?
  - Have any other family members been involved in your school plans after high school?
- PERCEPTIONS ON WHAT PARENTS THINK (CHANGE?)
  - [If they applied to college, were rejected OR didn't apply to college] What do you think your parents think about your school-related plans?
  - [If they applied to college, were accepted] What do you think your parents think about the schools that accepted you?

**Estudiante Colección de datos fase #3: 1 de marzo, 2012 – 1 de mayo, 2012, después de escuchar, mientras eligen**

- EXPECTATIVAS DE LO QUE PASARA (CAMBIO?)
  - [Si aplico a la universidad] Has escuchado de las universidades a las cuales aplicaste?
  - [Si aplico a la universidad, fue aceptada/o]
    - A cual piensas que vas a atender? (Seguir preguntando sobre sus decisiones y las razones por ellas)
    - Cuales factores estas considerando en escoger a una universidad? (Seguir preguntando sobre factores como distancia, finanzas, etc.)
    - Como llegaste a esas decisiones? (Seguir preguntando sobre factores como distancia, finanzas, grados, adecuado, etc.)
    - En que maneras estas planeando en aprender más sobre las universidades a las cuales fuiste aceptada? (Seguir preguntando sobre visitas planeadas a las universidades, folletos, juntas, etc.)
  - [Si aplico a la universidad, fue rechazada/o O si no aplico a la universidad]
    - En este momento, que planes tienes cuando termines la preparatoria?
    - Cual es la probabilidad de que estos planes se vuelvan realidad?
    - Piensas que en un futuro volverás a aplicar a la universidad?
  - Que deseas que pase este año en términos de ir a la universidad?
  - Que esperas que pase este año en términos de ir a la universidad?
  - Tienes algunas preocupaciones sobre tus planes después de la preparatoria? Si hay algunos, cuales son?
- PERCEPCIONES SOBRE LA UNIVERSIDAD (CAMBIO?)
  - Has cambiado de idea de cómo será la universidad?
  - Que cosas nuevas has aprendido sobre la universidad?
- COMUNICACIÓN CON LOS PADRES (CAMBIO?)
  - Has hablado con tus padres sobre lo que esperas que pase este año?
  - Has hablado con tus padres sobre tus opciones y planes después de la preparatoria?
  - [Si aplico a la universidad, fue aceptada/o] Tus padres han dicho que es lo que desean que sea la universidad para ti?
  - Se han involucrado algún otros miembros familiares en decidir tus planes después de la preparatoria?
- PERCEPCIONES DE LO QUE PIENSAN LOS PADRES (CAMBIO?)
  - [Si aplico a la universidad, fue rechazada/o O si no aplico a la universidad] Que piensas tu que tus padres piensan sobre tus futuros planes escolares?
  - [Si aplico a la universidad, fue aceptada/o] Que piensas tu que tus padres piensan sobre las universidades a las cuales te aceptaron?





## **Appendix G: Phase 4 Parent Protocols**

### **Data Collection Phase #4: after July 15, 2012, after choosing**

- How do you feel about the decisions that were made?
- Why do you think that specific decision was made? (Probe on “the tipping point”)
- What do you hope will happen this year in terms of your child going to college (Probe on the comfort/reasons behind hopes)?
- What do you expect will happen this year in terms of your child going to college (Probe on their perception of their child’s capabilities in meeting those expectations and on the comfort/reasons behind expectations)
- Can you share with me existing concerns or fears about your child considering/going to college?
- Have you spoken to your child about your current hopes and expectations?
- Do you have other younger children? If so will you do things different for their process?
- How has my presence influenced your decision-making process?

### **Padres Colección de datos fase #4: después del 16 de julio, 2012, después de elegir**

- Que piensa sobre las decisiones que fueron tomadas?
- Porque piensa que esas decisiones especificas fueron hechas? (Seguir preguntando sobre el factor que más le animó)
- Que es lo que desea que ocurra este año en términos de que su hija/o vaya a la universidad? (Seguir preguntado sobre las razones por eso)
- Que es lo que espera que ocurra este año en términos de que su hija/o vaya a la universidad? (Seguir preguntando sobre la capacidad de que su hija/o alcance esas expectativas y las razones por esas expectativas)
- Tiene usted alguna preocupación o temor de que su hija/o considere/vaya a la universidad?
- Ha tenido conversaciones sobre lo que en este momento usted desea y espera de ella?
- Usted tiene otros hijos más chicos? Si es así, que piensa que usted hiciera diferente para el proceso de ellos?
- Como piensa que mi presencia ha influenciado su proceso de toma de decisión?

## **Appendix H: Phase 4 Youth Protocols**

### **Student Data Collection Phase #4: after July 15, 2012, after choosing**

- How do you feel about the decisions made? Why or why not?
- Why do you think that specific decision was made? (Probe on “the tipping point”)
- What are your school-related plans at the moment?
  - What do you hope will happen this year in terms of you going to college?
  - What do you expect will happen this year in terms of you going to college?
- Do you have any worries or concerns about your current plans?
- Have you spoken to your parents about your current thoughts or plans?
- What do you think your parents think about your current plans?
- How has my presence influenced your decision-making process?

### **Estudiante Colección de datos fase #4: después del 16 de julio, 2012, después de elegir**

- Como te sientes sobre las decisiones que hiciste? Por que?
- Porque piensas que esas decisiones especificas fueron hechas? (Seguir preguntando sobre el factor que más le animó)
- En este momento, que planes tienes cuando termines la preparatoria?
  - Que deseas que pase este año en términos de ir a la universidad?
  - Que esperas que pase este año en términos de ir a la universidad?
- Tienes algunas preocupaciones sobre tus planes después de la preparatoria? Si hay algunos, cuales son?
- Has hablado con tus padres sobre tus planes escolares?
- Que piensas tu que tus padres piensan sobre tus planes escolares?
- Como es que mi presencia ha influenciado tu manera de hacer decisiones?

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