

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

A study of Latino/a parents participating in the Bright Futures college preparation program and their perceived role in the college choice process

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6tq33493>

Author

Alvarado, Nelly

Publication Date

2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

A study of Latino/a parents participating in the Bright Futures college preparation program and
their perceived role in the college choice process

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

by

Nelly Alvarado

2016

© Copyright by

Nelly Alvarado

2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A study of Latino/a parents participating in the Bright Futures college preparation program and their perceived role in the college choice process

By

Nelly Alvarado

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Robert A. Rhoads, Co-Chair

Professor Richard L. Wagoner, Co-Chair

Disparities in college degree attainment rates between students of different racial/ethnic groups continue to exist. The degree attainment gap is projected to widen for Latino/a students as the population continues to grow. Students make college choices from the direct and indirect messages they receive from friends, their schools, and families. Parents' attitudes and expectations may influence students' academic achievement, college preparation and college choices. However, little empirical research is available on Latino/a parents and the ways, if any, they work with their children around college going or their understanding of the higher education structure.

Through analysis of interviews with 30 Latino/a parents about their perceived role in their child's college choice and search process revealed that parents who participate in a

college access program provide both direct and indirect support to their children. Although parents provide academic and administrative direct support, they mostly support their children via indirect approaches such as providing motivation and encouragement, setting expectations, and providing verbal support and encouragement. Participant demonstrated some knowledge about admissions requirements to 4-year public universities. However, more than half of participants indicated being unfamiliar with the higher education structure. As a result, parents felt unequipped to provide advise in helping students choose colleges, thus leaving the decision as to where to apply to the child. Despite their unfamiliarity with the higher education structure, parents made a distinction between 2-year and 4-year public colleges. This suggests that parents do not have a monolithic view of higher education. Instead, they view it as a binary set of institutions.

The dissertation of Nelly Alvarado is approved.

Mark Kevin Eagan

Robert C. Romero

Robert A. Rhoads, Committee Co-Chair

Richard L. Wagoner, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

DEDICATION

To my parents, who taught me the importance of a college education.

Mis logros son producto de sus esfuerzos. Gracias por su apoyo, cariño y motivación:

Enrique & Maria Alvarado

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract of the Dissertation.....	ii
Committee	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
Acknowledgements	x
Vita	xi
Chapter 1: Problem Statement	1
Introduction.....	1
Problem Statement	2
Purpose of the Study	7
Goals of Study.....	7
Research Questions	8
Research Site and Sample.....	9
Research Design.....	9
Data Analysis	11
Significance of the Research for Solving the Problem/Public Engagement.....	11
Chapter Summary	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review	14
Unequal Access to Postsecondary Education	14
Residency Status	18
Decision-Making Processes	21
Rational Choice Theory	22
Social, Cultural, and Ecological Models.....	25

Social & Cultural Capital.....	28
Guidance Counselors	32
College Preparation Programs	34
Parent Involvement.....	36
Parent Involvement Programs.....	41
Chapter Summary	45
Chapter 3: Methods	47
Research Design.....	48
Site Selection	49
Interview Subjects.....	54
The Project.....	54
Data Collection Methods	55
Data Analysis	57
Ethical Issues	60
Ensuring Credibility and Trustworthiness	62
Chapter Summary	63
Chapter 4: Findings	64
Introduction.....	64
Summary of Research Participants	65
A. Participant Pool Profile.....	66
B. Parent Participation Categories and Data Analysis	71
C. Importance of a College Education	73
Preparation for College.....	75

A. Expectation to Go to College.....	76
B. Academic Support.....	81
C. Aspirational Support.....	84
D. Familial Support.....	89
College Choice Decisions.....	93
A. College Choices.....	93
B. Familiarity with the Higher Education Structure.....	94
C. Most Important Factor in Choosing a College.....	97
D. Importance of the University’s Prestige.....	101
E. Importance of the Type of College Child Attends.....	105
F. Freshman Year Living Options.....	109
G. Paying for College.....	111
Involvement in the Bright Futures Program.....	120
A. Perception of Involvement.....	120
B. Greater Understanding of University Preparation and Types of Universities.....	121
C. Increased Conversations about College.....	123
D. Increased Motivation.....	125
Chapter Summary.....	126
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	130
Introduction.....	130
Summary of Findings.....	131
Significance of Findings.....	132

Implications for Practice	136
Implications for Future Research	138
Research Limitations	139
Conclusion	141
Appendices	
Appendix A: Interview Protocol	143
Appendix B: Parent Questionnaire	145
Appendix C: Preliminary Code Book	149
Appendix D: Participant Consent Form	151
References	155

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to the families who graciously agreed to participate in my study. Their willingness to share with me their educational aspirations for their children is invaluable. Muchas gracias! Without them, the completion of this study would not have been possible. I am truly thankful to my mom for teaching me the importance of a college education and supporting me along the way. I want to thank my sisters Norma and Nancy for providing endless encouragement, support and inspiration throughout the process. I also want to thank my cousin Alfonso Alfaro, Fernando Castaneda, my friends, and family who rooted for me along the way.

In addition, I want to thank my committee members, Professors Richard Wagoner, Robert Rhoads, Robert Romero, and Mark Kevin Eagan for their feedback and assistance. Thank you for all the time and energy you spent on my dissertation. The knowledge and service you provided was instrumental during this process. I would have not have completed my dissertation without your support.

VITA

- 2005 B.A., Psychology and Social Behavior & Criminology Law and Society
University of California, Irvine
- 2006 Program Coordinator
University of California, Irvine
Center for Educational Partnerships
- 2007 Program Specialist
Upward Bound Math & Science Program
El Camino College Compton Center
- 2008 Master of Public Administration
California State University, Long Beach
- 2013 Program Manager
Upward Bound Math & Science Program
El Camino College Compton Center
- 2015 Interim Director of Enrollment Services
El Camino College Compton Center

Chapter 1

Problem Statement

Introduction

Latino/a students rely on parents and siblings for guidance with the college choice process (Ceja, 2004; McDonough, 1997). Research suggests that Latino/a parents have the highest college aspirations for their children, but they lack basic college knowledge to help their children navigate the college choice process (Ceja, 2004; McDonough, 1997; Oliva, 2008; Tornantzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). Parents who do not hold a college degree have limited experience accessing information and applying to postsecondary institutions (Ceja, 2004). As a result, the degree to which Latino/a parents can assist their children throughout the process is limited by their own college knowledge (Tornatsky et al., 2002). Yet, students make college choices from implicit and explicit messages they receive from their social and organizational networks (McDonough, 1997). Research recommends targeting families with college information given the important influence of the family in the college choice process (Perez & McDonough, 2008). If Latino/a families are better versed in college knowledge, perhaps students can increase their prospects for college choices and expand their thinking about options that are better suited for their needs. Moreover, the information may help broaden parent's views about options that are a better fit. However, little is known about whether students are receiving advice related to college decision making from their parents. For this reason, the goal of this research project is to explore the role Latino/a parents play in the college choice process via participation in a college access program and the specific ways in which they influence student choice. The information gathered from parent interviews can guide the

development of a culturally relevant curriculum that facilitates more Latino students through the educational pipeline (Perez & McDonough, 2008).

Problem Statement

There is a marked difference in college degree attainment rates between racial/ethnic groups. The educational gaps and growing demographics of underrepresented groups threaten to widen current educational gaps throughout the United States (College Board, 2008; Foundation, 2009; Kirsch, 2007). Although the percentage of young adults with a bachelor's degree has increased for all racial/ethnic groups in the past forty years, the gap in bachelor's degree attainment has increased from 12 to 18 percentage points between White and African American students and from 14 to 25 percentage points between White and Latino students (Aud, Hussar, Planty, Snyder, Bianco, Fox, Frohlich, Kemp, & Drake, 2010). The existing degree attainment gap between White and Latino students is steadily widening and is expected to further increase as the Latino population grows from 14 percent to slightly more than 20 percent in the next twenty years (Kirsh et al., 2007; Rivas, Perez, Alvarez, & Solorzano, 2007).

The low educational attainment of Latinos poses a problem to states such as California, Texas, and Florida since more than half, approximately 55 percent, of the U.S. Latino population resides in one of the three states (Pew, 2013). Of these states, California has the largest Latino population in the nation, with about 14.4 million Latinos or one-fourth of U.S. Latinos (Pew, 2013). Within California, Los Angeles County alone contains 4.8 million Latinos or nine percent of the nation's population (Pew, 2013). Consequently, Latinos comprise more than 70 percent of the student population in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest

school district in the nation (Burciaga, Perez-Huber, & Solorzano, 2009). If population patterns hold, Latinos/as will be the largest student group in the K-12 public school system by 2050.

Latino/a students are often the first within their immediate family to pursue a formal postsecondary education (Choy, 2001; Solorzano, 2005). When compared with students from different racial/ethnic groups, Latino/a first-generation college students are less likely to enroll in 4-year institutions (Choy, 2001; Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). The likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary education has been linked to parents' educational levels even when other factors, such as income, are taken into account (Choy, 2001). For this reason, it is imperative to explore the experiences of families as they navigate the college choice process for the first time.

The following section illustrates the manner in which Latino students' college choices contribute to the degree attainment gap. A report on California's college going rates for fall 2009 from the California Postsecondary Education Commission indicates that a total of 119,763 students enrolled in college that year. White students represent 40 percent of first time students in California's public colleges and universities, while African American and Latino students account for seven and 50 percent respectively (Commission, 2009). Of the White students enrolled, 16 percent enrolled in a University of California campus, 27 percent enrolled in California State Universities (CSU), and 56 percent enrolled in community colleges. African American students account for 11 percent of students enrolled in a University of California campus, 27 percent in a California State University, and 61 percent in community colleges, while Latino students account for nine percent in a University of California campuses, 25 percent in California State Universities, and 64 percent in community colleges. The data illustrate that Latino/a students represent a larger portion of students enrolling in institutions of postsecondary

education by accounting for half of the students enrolled in college that year; however, the majority of Latino students begin their postsecondary education in California Community Colleges at higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups (Aud, 2010; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Fry 2002; Perna, 2006; Rivas et al., 2007). If this pattern continues, the majority of community college students in California will be Latino/a (Rivas et al., 2007).

While Latino/a student enrollment in California Community Colleges has increased, transfer rates have not. Estimates indicate that only 25 percent of students (College Board, 2008; Kirst, 2008) and an even smaller percentage of Latino/a students successfully transfer to 4-year universities (Rivas et al., 2007). Research indicates that 75 of every 100 first-time Latino/a college students in California enroll in community colleges. Of the 75 Latino/a students enrolled, approximately seven transfer into a public 4-year university (Rivas et al., 2007). The data challenges the increasingly popular cost containment strategy of enrolling in a low-tuition college to begin a post-secondary education. Latino/a students who begin their postsecondary education in community college are less likely to transfer and obtain a wide range of personal, financial, and other lifelong benefits (such as higher lifetime earnings, more fulfilling work environments, healthier lifestyles, be better informed customers, and have greater civic participation) associated with earning a bachelor's degree (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2010; Perna, 2000). Given the evidence, it is essential to expand the research on the role Latino parents play in their child's college choice process. If we are unable to close the existing degree attainment rates between White and Latino students, a larger proportion of Latino youth will be unable to reap the benefits associated with earning a bachelor's degree.

Research on Latino/a community college students indicates that Latino/a students are often ineligible to apply to 4-year universities due to lack of academic preparation (Fry, 2002;

Oakes, 2008) and college preparatory counseling (McDonough & Calderone, 2006; Powell, 1996). The literature also suggests that college enrollment decisions are sensitive to parental willingness to pay (Hossler, Hu, & Schmit, 1998) and to rising tuition costs (Heller, 1997; Kane, 1995; St. John, 1990); confirming Leslie and Brinkman's broad finding over thirty years ago: as tuition rises, student enrollment decreases (1987).

However, there are instances in which Latino/a students qualify for and are admitted to 4-year universities, yet they defer enrollment. Research concludes that eligible Latino/s students opt for enrollment in community colleges because the schools are closer to home and are less expensive than 4-year universities (Hagedorn, 2004; Rivas et al., 2007). Lower tuition costs attract Latino/a students from working class families (Gandara, Larson, Mehan, & Rumberger, 1998). To overcome inability to pay as a deterrent in choosing a postsecondary institution in which to enroll researchers and policy makers have advocated awarding financial aid to the most economically disadvantaged students, since student aid, at least in the form of grants, is believed to increase college going rates of low-income individuals (Berkner, & Chavez, 1997; Post, 1990; Tierney & Venegas, 2009).

A variety of federal, state, and institutional aid programs have evolved to prevent students being deterred by inability to pay when choosing a postsecondary institution in which to enroll (Baum & Payea, 2010). Yet, students are not taking advantage of the available funding sources. For instance, California funds Cal Grants A and B to assist eligible low-income students with tuition and fees at the University of California and the California State University as well as most independent colleges and universities (California Student Aid Commission, 2011). Of the 404,987 students who graduated from high school in California in the 2009-2010 academic-years, 144,296 (35%) completed the requirements for admission to a four-year institution.

Approximately 3,281 (27%) of first-time freshmen who applied, were awarded a Cal Grant A or B award to cover tuition and fees. However, approximately half (1,785) actually claimed their awards (Commission, 2011). The discrepancy in Cal Grant awards and award use raises an important question: Why are academically eligible students “undermatching” (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009) or choosing postsecondary alternatives that are less selective than their academic credentials give them access to? Insight into parents’ role during the college choice process and the manner in which they influence and participate in the process might help explain this phenomenon.

Often times, researchers and policy makers assume students make decisions in a linear manner. However, research has proven this is not the way low-income students make decisions (Luna de la Rosa, 2006; McDonough & Calderone, 2006; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). As a result, researchers are exploring alternate ways to research perceptions of college affordability. These studies have concluded that prospective college students lack knowledge in regards to financial aid programs (Horn, Chen, & Chapman, 2003), and that students’ and families’ perceptions of college costs and financial aid are contributing factors affecting low-income students’ pursuit of postsecondary education (Berkner & Chavez, 1997; Luna de la Rosa, 2006; Heller, 1997; Hossler et al., 1998; Kane, 1995; Post, 1990; St. John, 1990). Researchers have generally reported that low-income students and parents overestimate the costs of tuition and perceive information about financial aid and college affordability differently than their higher income peers (Berkner & Chavez, 1997; Choy, 2001; Luna de la Rosa, 2006; Post, 1990). These studies illustrate the need to understand the role Latino parents play in the college choice process since unfounded perceptions may hinder enrollment in 4-year colleges.

Purpose of the Study

Parents can influence their child's college choices. Informed parents can help their children select college options that will help them succeed and thrive throughout their college career. However, very little empirical research exists on the role Latino parents play in their child's college choice process. Research has concluded that parents' attitudes and expectations about college are influential in the college choice process (McDonough, 1997). Most research focuses on transmitting essential college information or "college knowledge" (Auerbach, 2004; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2009; Fann, Jarsky, McDonough, 2009) to promote college preparation. This project is particularly interested in the role, if any, Latino parents play in their child's college choice process via participation in a college access program and the specific ways parents influence and participate in the process. Moreover, the study hopes to understand the manner in which parents view and understand the structure of higher education. Insight about their views and understanding may help practitioners develop innovative approaches to help parents understand the wide range of college opportunities and the implications of each choice.

Goals of the Study

The project's goal is to have educators develop effective practices to market higher education in an effort to increase the number of Latino/a students enrolling in 4-year institutions of higher education to help close the college access gap. To document this, I conducted semi-structured in depth phenomenological interviews to probe for specific tangible ways parents participate in the college choice process and probe for parents' awareness and familiarity with the structure of higher education. In-depth semi-structured interviews were appropriate because they help us understand the lived experiences of Latino/a families as they make college-going

decisions (Creswell, 2009). The focus of inquiry was on the meaning and lived experiences of Latino families, the essence of phenomenological studies (Patton, 2001). Given the importance of fit and match to student success and degree attainment, the interview findings were used to determine resources parents need and develop a Parent College Planning curriculum that provides information, guidance, and support to navigate the college choice process.

Research Questions

This study aims to provide insight on the role Latino/a parents play in the college search and choice process and the specific ways in which they participate and influence student choice via their participation in a college access program. Moreover, the study hopes to understand parents' knowledge of the higher education structure. The following research questions anchor this study:

1. How do Latino/a parents define the roles they play in their child's college search and choice process?
2. Given the role they play, how do Latino/a parents influence and participate in the college search and choice process?
3. How do Latino/a parents' define and perceive the higher education structure?
4. How does the Bright Futures program help Latino/a parents support their children through the college choice process?

Research Site and Sample

Research Site. The study site for my research was the Bright Futures Program¹. The Bright Futures Program is a non-profit college preparation program in Southern California. The program was the site for this qualitative research project. This site was primarily chosen because its demographics match the three predominant factors: race/ethnicity, family income and parental education levels identified by the literature as influencing factors in students' college enrollment decisions.

Research Sample. This study was particularly interested in looking at the college search and choice process of Latino/a low-income, first generation families. The goal of the study was to have a better understanding of the parental perspective since research in this area is limited. Therefore, this study recruited 20-25 parents who have a child enrolled in the Bright Futures college access program.

Research Design

This study examined parents' perceived role in the college choice process of their children and the specific ways they participate in the process. The nature of the research questions necessitated a phenomenological qualitative research approach. Qualitative interviews were necessary to conduct this study and capture this particular phenomenon given the research questions. The focus of the study was on understanding the essence of the way in which low-income and first generation college families make individual college choices and use the method of bracketing to search for commonalities (Creswell, 2009). More importantly, a phenomenological approach captured parents' perspectives, not their children's perceptions of

¹ The Bright Futures Program is pseudonym for the actual study site

their behavior or the meaning researchers attach to the research (Creswell, 2009). The in-depth interviews included open-ended questions to understand and capture the richly descriptive accounts of Latino/a parents not obtained through surveys and quantitative methods (Merriam, 2009). In other words, in depth interviewing allowed us to understand what Latino families experience during the college choice process as directly as possible for ourselves (Patton, 2001). Data for this study was obtained from three sources: (1) researcher reflection notes, (2) parent interviews and, (3) participant questionnaire.

Researcher Reflection Notes. Prior to conducting interviews, I explored past experiences to provide background data through which the audience can better understand the topic, participants, and the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). This process creates multiple strategies of validity to create reader confidence in the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2009). The researcher field notes were not used to answer the research questions.

Parent Interviews. The interviews were conducted using a piloted semi-structured interview protocol (Creswell, 2009) with Latino/a parents to probe about their perceived role in the college search and choice stages and the specific ways they participate in the process. A semi-structured interview protocol was optimal for exploring participant perspectives that answer the research questions (Merriam, 2009). The interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

Participant Questionnaire. After the interview, parents were asked to complete a brief participant questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of a series of 16 questions (Appendix B). It was used as a reference for crosschecking interview data to triangulate emerging findings (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

Researcher Reflection Notes. Consistent with qualitative methodology, the researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). Prior to conducting interviews, I explored past experiences to provide background data through which the audience can better understand the topic, participants, and the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). I noted personal prejudices, viewpoints and assumptions (Merriam, 2009). This process created multiple strategies of validity to create reader confidence in the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2009).

Interview Data. The data from the in depth interviews was analyzed consistent with phenomenological research. Phenomenological research uses the analysis of significant statements, generation of meaning units, and the development of an essence description (Creswell, 2009).

Participant Questionnaire. The data from the participant questionnaire was inputted into an Excel spreadsheet. This secondary source of data allowed me to sort parents' demographic information, education, family size and income to gain a broader understanding of the issues under investigation. The descriptive statistics were used to triangulate findings; thus increase reliability (Merriam, 2009) and reduce the risk that conclusions reflect self-reported or other systematic biases or limitations of phenomenological qualitative studies (Maxwell, 2005).

Significance of the Research for Solving the Problem/Public Engagement

A better understanding of the way Latino/a families make college choices and the role parents play in the process can lead to changes in the way students select colleges. Given the importance of fit and match to student success and degree attainment, the interview findings

were used to determine parents' needs to guide and support their children. Moreover, it used interview data to develop a Parent College Planning workshop series that provides specific information about when it is best to counsel parents to get involved in the process and when to sit back. The results of the study lead to recommendations to increase parental support services and is intended to have practical implications for the research site, programs that provide services to parents, as well as colleges and universities. For instance, colleges and universities may help expand students college choice sets by offering parent information sessions that stress the importance of finding an institution that best suits student needs for the purposes of persistence and retention (Perez & McDonough, 2008). Study results will be shared with various stakeholders including the research site. Additional interested parties include educational outreach programs, particularly those targeting Latino/a students, and university outreach departments.

Chapter Summary

This study examined of the role, if any, Latino/a parents play in their child's college search and choice process and the specific ways they influence and participate student choice via their participation in a college access program. A qualitative phenomenological research study was used to capture the perspective of 30 Latino/a parents. Parent interview data was used to answer the research questions. Researcher reflection notes were used to filter biases. A participant questionnaire was used as a reference point in the analysis of the interview data to triangulate research findings. Data analysis was consistent with phenomenological research: analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of an

essence description (Creswell, 2009). Research findings were presented as an executive summary to the research site.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The review of the literature is organized in six sections. The first section sets a context for examining unequal access to college between racial/ethnic groups, socio-economic status, and parental educational attainment. Following this introduction, I examine two theories: (1) rational choice and (2) social, cultural, ecological theories, to explain factors that influence students' decision-making processes. The third section explains the concept of social and cultural capital and its ability to enable or constrain educational opportunities. The following section focuses on the role of guidance counselors, college preparation programs, and parents in transmitting information about educational opportunities. Next, I turn to the literature on culturally relevant parent intervention programs that promote college enrollment. Through a review of literature on parent involvement, I situate my study as a promising intervention. I conclude with a rationale for a culturally relevant Parent College Planning curriculum targeted to inform parents about the higher education opportunity structure.

Unequal Access to Postsecondary Education

A college degree confers a wide range of personal and financial benefits to an individual and society (Baum et al., 2010; Perna 2000; Vernez, Krop, & Rydell, 1999). The benefits conferred to an individual, such as higher earnings, are often emphasized as the primary benefit of higher education. But social benefits are equally important. Research on the costs and benefits of closing educational gaps among underrepresented groups found that the public benefits of education exceed the personal benefits enjoyed by an individual (Vernez et al., 1999). Society benefits from reduced crime, improved social cohesion, technological innovations and

intergenerational benefits. The intergenerational benefits imparted by education enable parents to transmit knowledge to their children derived from their educational experiences (Vernez et al, 1999). Despite the personal and social benefits, educational attainment continues to be an obstacle for underrepresented populations.

Disparate college enrollment rates reveal inequities in access and lifetime opportunity. An examination of college completion gaps suggests that three factors--race/ethnicity, family income levels and parental education-- influence students' college enrollment decisions. Each factor is powerful, but the confluence of factors contributes to inequity of access and widening attainment gaps (Aud, 2010; Baum et al., 2010; Choy, 2001; Hawkins & Lautz, 2005; Kane, 1995; Pell Institute, 2005).

Although the percentage of young adults with a bachelor's degree has increased for all racial/ethnic groups in the past forty years, gaps in enrollment persist. The Condition of Education 2010 Report suggests that enrollment in 4-year postsecondary institutions varies by race/ethnicity (Aud et al., 2010). White students represent 67 percent of undergraduate enrollments, while African American and Latino students account for 11 percent and 10 percent respectively (Aud et al., 2010). Inequity of access at this juncture of the educational pipeline has solemn implications for educational attainment rates. Data indicates that degree gaps have increased from 12 to 18 percentage points between White and African American students and from 14 to 25 percentage points between White and Latino students (Aud et al., 2010). The data reveals that the attainment gap for Latinos/as increased by 11 points, the largest increase of all racial/ethnic groups. In other words, Latino/a students have lower educational attainment rates than other racial/ethnic groups.

Despite the degree attainment trends, many Latino/a students aspire to beat the odds and pursue higher education. A study examining the percent of U.S. eighth grade students aspiring to attend college by race/ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status concluded that college aspirations for Latino/a students are high (Solorzano, 1991). Yet, Latino/a students have the lowest educational attainment in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups. The results support nurturing Latino/a student's educational aspirations to promote academic success.

A second factor contributing to the significant and persistent gaps in postsecondary enrollment is family socio-economic status (SES). For the past 30 years, high school graduates from the top income quartile have enrolled in college at a rate 25-40 percentage points higher than students from the lowest income quartile (Hawkins & Lautz, 2005; Kane, 1995; Pell Institute, 2005). The data suggests that family income impacts students' ability to attend postsecondary institutions of higher education. While most statistics report the status of low-income students as a whole, this group is not homogenous. Low-income students are more likely than their higher income peers to be African American, Hispanic, or Asian, and be the first in their family to go to college.

The third factor negatively impacting students' likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary education is being the first in the family to go to college. First generation college students are less likely to enroll and complete college degrees than students with similar family incomes whose parents are college graduates (Baum et al., 2010). When accounting for parental education levels, 65 percent of first generation college students enroll in 4-year institutions of postsecondary education in contrast to 87 percent of those whose parents hold a bachelor's degree or higher (Choy, 2001). The data illustrates the positive association between parental educational attainment and college enrollment rates for students (Choy, 2001). Students whose

parents hold a bachelor's degree are more likely to enroll in college immediately after finishing high school. Parental educational attainment matters even for graduates who as seniors planned to enroll in a 4-year university immediately after high school. An examination of enrollment data indicate that 20 percent of first generation college students postpone their plans to enroll in a 4-year institution of higher education. In contrast, students whose parents have at least a bachelor's degree postpone their plans nine percent of the time (Choy, 2001).

Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera (2005) provide a comprehensive illustration of the educational pipeline and educational attainment levels of Latino/a students. Their analysis shows several "leakage" points along the educational pipeline. Of every 100 Latino/a elementary school students, approximately 52 graduate from high school. Of those, approximately 11 attend a 4-year college, while 20 enroll in 2-year community college. Of the 31 who pursue postsecondary education, 10 graduate with a bachelor's degree and less than 4 graduate with a graduate or professional degree (Solorzano et al., 2005). The researchers assert that, "what makes this data specially noteworthy is the fact that Latinas/os represent the largest ethnic/racial group in the United States but have the lowest educational attainment rates among all groups" (p.277).

Research suggests that the low educational attainment of low-income, first generation and Latino/a students is attributed to lack of information about educational opportunities (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Latino/a students who are unaware of the college opportunity structure are more likely to enroll in less selective and less challenging colleges (Rivas et al., 2007). An examination of California's community college enrollments brings attention to the growing number of Latino/a students in 2-year community colleges. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office reports that between 2005 and 2011, the enrollment of Latinos/as in community college increased from 28 percent to 33 percent (California Community Colleges

Chancellor's Office, (2005-2011). During this period, the enrollment of African American students remained steady at seven percent, while that of White students decreased four percentage points (from 36 to 32 percent). The data illustrate that participation in 2-year community colleges continues to be the most popular route of entry into postsecondary education for many Latino/a students. If this pattern continues, the majority of community college students in California will be Latino/a (Rivas et al., 2007).

Residency Status

It is estimated that approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school each year (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2015). The majority of the children were brought to the U.S. at an early age by their parents and have some association with their countries of origin, but primarily identify with the U.S. Many of them have been in this country nearly their entire lives and have received their primary and secondary education in the country. Without a means to legalize their status, these children are seldom able to go to college, cannot work legally, and cannot work to contribute to the economy given their immigration status.

The Office of Government and Legislative and Community Relations at California State University, Long Beach (2015) reports that the number of undocumented high school graduates in California is 20,000 to 24,000. Of these, approximately five to ten percent enroll in postsecondary education (Immigration Policy Center, 2007). A breakdown of students by type of institution is unknown since UC campuses are the only institutions to higher education that can report enrollment of undocumented students. Nevertheless, it is estimated that community colleges in the state have the highest enrollment (Rivas et al., 2007). This is attributed to the fact

that undocumented students often feel it is their only affordable option for postsecondary education because they are ineligible for federal and state financial assistance (Rivas et al., 2007).

In an effort to minimize institutional barriers preventing undocumented students from enrolling in institutions of higher education, Governor Gray Davis signed Assembly Bill 540 (AB 540) into law in 2001. AB 540 added a new section to the California Education Code that created an exemption from payment of non-resident tuition for certain non-resident students, which include U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents and undocumented immigrants. To qualify for the exemption students must: (1) have attended a California high school for three or more years, (2) have graduated from a California high school or attained the equivalent of a high school diploma, (3) enroll in a campus of one of the three state institutions of higher education, and (4) file an affidavit with the college/university stating that the student meets the law's requirements and that the student has filed an application to legalize their immigration status or will do so as soon as they become eligible.

Although AB 540 allows qualified students to be exempt from paying out-of-state tuition, many students have difficulty financing their education with rising tuition costs, receiving the AB 540 waiver, accessing the affidavit form, experience hostility and discrimination and lack the ability to find employment where they can utilize their college education due to their immigration status (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2015). In addition, undocumented students are ineligible for federal financial aid. Thus, they must seek private scholarships and other resources to fund their education.

In 2011, Jerry Brown signed the California Dream Act, or Assembly Bills 130 and 131. The California Dream Act allows undocumented and nonresident documented students who meet

AB 540 provisions to apply for and receive private scholarships funded through public universities, state-administered financial aid, university grants, community college fee waivers, and Cal Grants (California Student Aid Commission, 2015). It is important to note that undocumented students are still ineligible to receive federal student aid.

Efforts to minimize barriers for undocumented students are ongoing. In 2012, President Obama created a new policy calling for deferred action for certain undocumented youth who were brought to the U.S. as children. Under a directive from the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, these youth may be granted a type of temporary permission to stay in the U.S. called “deferred action.” The Obama administration called this program Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). When people apply for DACA, they apply at the same time for a social security number and employment authorization (a work permit) that is valid for the same amount of time as their DACA. It is important to note that DACA is not the same as financial aid and does not grant lawful immigration status nor does it provide a pathway to citizenship.

In 2014, President Obama announced an expansion of the DACA program. However, a federal district court in Texan issued an order that puts the “expanded DACA” program on hold temporarily. People cannot apply for “expanded DACA” at this time. However, people who believe they are eligible for DACA under the pre-expansion guidelines may still apply for DACA under those guidelines.

Given the opportunity, undocumented students can help fill the growing demand for high skilled workers (Immigration Policy Center, 2007). Failing to address the plight of undocumented youth imposes financial and emotional costs not only on undocumented students themselves, but also on U.S. economy and society as a whole (Immigration Policy Center, 2007).

Decision-Making Processes

This section examines how policies and family characteristics have influenced students' college choice decisions. A report by Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacob and Cummins for the Lumina Foundation for Education provides an overview of the college choice process and its evolution during the last half of the 20th century (2004). The report indicates that prior to the 1950s, "fewer than two of every ten high school graduates went to college" (p.1). It was uncommon to find underrepresented students in college at this time. The overall student population had limited access to guidance literature and decisions to attend college were largely determined by personal values or by a college's reputation.

By the 1960s, the War on Poverty campaign and the civil rights and women's rights movements prompted increases in the number of women and other underrepresented groups in college campuses. During this time, the most comprehensive national legislation concerning higher education also took place. President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted the Higher Education Act (HEA) 1965, the first broad federal financial assistance program designed to provide students with the financial resources to attend college. Federal assistance programs expanded traditionally underrepresented students' college choices. As federal financial aid shifted from grants to loans in the 1980s, concerns about its effect on student enrollment increased. As a result, colleges and universities developed "corporate-style" marketing strategies to enhance student enrollments (p.17). Kinsie et al. (2004) summarize this period as follows:

When more students from lower-income families decided to attend college, the role of cost and financial aid in their decision making increased. Cost and financial aid also increased in importance as institutions competed for student enrollment, in part because new students brought desirable federal financial aid dollars with them. These trends

drove attempts to better understand students' search and choice processes and eventually led to the development of enrollment management field. (p.22)

For students from affluent families, the search for the right college began earlier than their senior year and required greater time, energy and financial investments. The availability of financial aid remained an important factor in students' college choice process. During the 1980s and 1990s, researchers developed two models to help explain the various influences on student's decision-making processes.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory was the first model used to explain student decision-making. Economic principles underlie this theory. This framework is commonly used to understand human decision-making, particularly when individuals make choices between alternative options (Gabay-Egozi, Shavit & Taish, 2010; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Rational choice theory posits that individuals make rational decisions based on cost and benefit assessments with the intent to maximize utility. Since individuals are the principal actors, this approach focuses on the person. Economic models describe the college choice process as a rational process that enables students to evaluate alternative options. Students select a particular postsecondary institution if the perceived benefits of attendance outweigh the perceived costs of non-attendance. Students assess the benefits of "the degree to which [college] completion would enhance...future occupational and economic attainment" (Gabay-Egozi et al., 2010, p.448). In considering risk, students weigh "the odds of failing to complete the prescribed course of study" (p.448). Defined this way, economic models focus on the influence of cost on student decision-making.

Research using an economic model explores the way in which changes in tuition or financial aid influence college choice processes (Heller, 1997; Kane 1995; St. John, 1990; Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Prior to the 1980s, most research on student price response focused exclusively on the relationship between tuition and student enrollment. These analyses were prominent before the Pell Grant program was implemented. After the implementation of the Pell Grant program, research focused on the impact of tuition and aid on student college enrollment decisions. St. John (1990) analyzed the National Longitudinal Study (NLS) and High School and Beyond (HSB) survey to examine the impact of costs and various sources of aid on the enrollment decisions of college applicants. The results suggest that tuition changes are negatively associated with students' decision to enroll (St. John, 1990). "Grant amounts [are] significant and positively associated with enrollment, while tuition [is] significant and negative" (p.169). The findings confirm Leslie and Brinkman's finding that as tuition rises, enrollments decrease (Leslie & Brinkman, 1987).

The research findings (Heller, 1997; Kane, 1995; St. John, 1990) are a cause for concern given the steep tuition increases that have taken place at public universities throughout the nation. The state of California leads the nation with a 21 percent tuition increase (College Board, 2011). Policy makers support early commitment programs to encourage students to enroll in postsecondary education since research suggests that aid has the same effect as tuition decreases in promoting enrollment (St. John, 1990). Early commitment financial aid programs operate under the assumption that students invest time and effort to meet college admissions entry requirements because doing so secures financial resources to cover college costs.

To investigate the effectiveness of early commitment programs, St. John, Musoba, Simmons, Chung, Schimt and Peng (2004) examined the role of Indiana's Twenty-first Century

Scholars Program in promoting postsecondary enrollment among participants. The program ensures substantial grant aid to participants who prepare for and enroll in college (St. John et al., 2004). The results indicate that participation in the Scholars Program positively impacts college enrollment (Leslie, 1987; St. John et al., 2004). The findings of the Twenty-first Century Scholars Program suggest that, “removing the financial barrier to access has an impact on preparation, especially when additional services are provided as part of the comprehensive program” (p.862).

A variety of federal, state, and institutional aid programs have evolved to encourage students to pursue postsecondary education and eliminate financial barriers that preclude students from enrolling in college (Baum & Payea, 2010). Yet, there are students who do not take advantage of available funding sources. For instance, California funds Cal Grants A and B to assist eligible low-income students with tuition and fees at the University of California and the California State University as well as most independent colleges and universities (California Student Aid Commission, 2011). Of the 404,987 students who graduated from high school in California in 2010, 35 percent completed the requirements for admission to a four-year institution. Of these, approximately 27 percent of first-time freshmen who applied, were awarded a Cal Grant A or B award. However, approximately half actually claimed their awards (California Student Aid Commission, 2011).

The number of claimed awards suggests that students, eligible to enroll in a 4-year college/university, are either enrolling in two-year institutions or not enrolling at all. The discrepancy in Cal Grant awards and award use raises an important question: Why are academically eligible students “undermatching” (Bowen et al., 2009) or choosing postsecondary alternatives that are less selective than their academic credentials give them access to? Insight

into the role parents play and the actions they take, if any, during the college choice process can help us understand students' college choices to help us develop intervention strategies that increase the educational attainment of Latino/a students.

College choice is a complicated phenomenon. Yet, there are researchers and policy makers who assume that students make decisions in a linear manner. They argue that as rational individuals, those who cannot afford college expenses opt out by failing to meet the necessary admissions requirements. A rational student would not prepare academically, apply for college, receive a financial aid award, but ultimately choose not to attend. Yet, research suggests that students do not make decisions in a rationalized manner (Luna de la Rosa, 2006; McDonough & Calderone 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008; Tierney & Venegas, 2009).

McDonough (1997) explains that, "this college choice process is not the economist's rational choice model of a world with perfect information, nor is it a policy maker's model of consumer choice accounting for cost and comfort considerations. It is a teenager left to her own devices in making...a "spur of the moment" decision (p.150). As a result, researchers are employing alternate models to investigate factors that affect students' college making choices. I discuss two alternate models in the next section.

Social, Cultural, and Ecological Models

Rational choice economic models do not consider individual and interrelated variables that are influential in students' decision- making processes. As a result, researchers are employing alternate models to investigate structures and factors that affect the ways in which students make college choices. Social and cultural models, assert that socioeconomic status, family, and the school context influence students' college aspirations. Social, cultural, ecological

studies on college choice utilize one of two approaches: developing college choice sets and perceptions of availability of financial aid.

The first approach focuses on the ways students develop a college choice set (De la Rosa, 2006; McDonough, 1997; St. John, Paulsen & Carter 2005; Zarate & Pachon, 2006).

McDonough (1997) conducted case studies to investigate the everyday experiences of high school seniors as they made postsecondary college choices. The results indicate that college choice is a complex process. Students make college choices from implicit and explicit messages they receive from their social and organizational networks (McDonough, 1997). Friends, families, and the school context of high socio-economic students seamlessly fit together to focus the students' aspirations to going to a four-year college. When these structures are agreement, they mutually reinforce student choice. As McDonough explains, "class based patterns of aspirations are a joint product of family and school influences" (p.152). For this reason, it is not uncommon for students with similar academic achievement and class background to make remarkably similar college choices. However, when the cultural and social contexts of students are not in agreement, students cannot make fully informed decisions due to conflicts and challenges (McDonough, 1997). For example, students from low-socioeconomic status groups have to weigh their aspirations against what their friends will say, the emotional and financial support expected from their family, and the reality of their high school's academic preparation (McDonough, 1997). The findings suggest that one's social class affects the college choices students make.

The second approach focuses on the ways in which perceptions of the availability of financial aid influence college decision-making processes (Luna de la Rosa, 2006; St. John, 1990; Tierney & Venegas, 2009; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). Research (Luna de la Rosa, 2006;

Zarate & Pachon, 2006) investigating the perceptions of financial aid availability demonstrates that low-income youth radically overestimate college costs. Luna de la Rosa (2006) surveyed 3,609 11th and 12th grade students from seven high schools serving low-income, inner-city communities in the Los Angeles area to investigate the impact of financial aid on college-going plans. Perna (2000) explains that the highest achieving students received more resources promoting college related behaviors. This conclusion is consistent with previous research (McDonough, 1997; McDonough & Calderone, 2006) findings that indicate only select groups of students receive financial aid information in schools serving large low-income and underrepresented student populations. Luna de la Rosa also supports studies (Horn & Nunez, 2000; Luna de la Rosa, 2006; Zarate & Pachon, 2006) concluding that the average low-income college student lacks knowledge in regards to financial aid programs.

Luna de la Rosa further suggests that information delivery methods are presented in sporadic and ineffective ways. Low-income students receive partial, dated, or inaccurate information that lead them to perceive college expenses as an obstacle to enrollment. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that students' and families' perceptions of college costs and financial aid are contributing factors affecting low-income students' pursuit of postsecondary education (Berkner & Chavez, 1997; Heller, 1997; Hossler & Schmit, 1998; Kane, 1995; Luna de la Rosa, 2006; Post, 1990; St. John, 1990). In some cases, perceptions become a hindrance to college going since student actions follow their unfounded assumptions about the costs of attending college (Luna de la Rosa, 2006). Overestimates play an integral part. Perceptions, whether founded or unfounded, dictate actions. Unfounded perceptions may explain why students decline admission and financial aid awards. Therefore, accurate and timely

information regarding college costs and available aid is necessary to influence enrollment decisions to close college access gaps.

The college choice process has changed significantly in the past 50 years (Kinzie et al, 2004). Students face important choices regarding their postsecondary educational plans. Social, cultural, ecological models (Luna de la Rosa, 2006; McDonough, 1997; McDonough & Calderone, 2006; Tierney & Venegas, 2009) highlight the fact that the college choice process is filled with interrelated variables that are unique to individuals. Research in this area suggests that low-income students can benefit from intervention strategies, particularly strategies that deliberately target parents and address concerns over college costs and accurate information about financial aid resources to promote college-going aspirations. Intervention strategies designed to help low-income students make a four-year college education viable option (McDonough & Calderone, 2006; Perna, 2006; Tierney & Venegas, 2009) can help close college access gaps. My research project attempted to understand Latino parents' role in their child's college choice process. It is important to understand the educational messages parents transmit to their children since they can affect the type of institution students enroll and their overall educational outcomes. The information obtained helped develop an alternative intervention that provides students and their families with the knowledge and skills needed to expand student's college choice decisions. This project used a social and cultural capital framework to shape the culturally relevant Parent College Planning workshops.

Social & Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital expands the category of capital to something more than economics; it identifies culture as a form of capital (1977). Cultural capital requires, and is

the product of an investment that secures further profit or a return on investment. He explains that success in school is attributed to the amount and type of cultural capital inherited from the family unit rather than by measures of individual talent or achievement. This is due to the fact that ability is a social construct and is the result of individuals having access to large amounts of monetary investments and profits, or those directly convertible into money, such as the costs of schooling and the cash equivalent of time devoted to study (Bourdieu, 1977).

Cultural capital is not the only type of capital accruing to individuals. Primarily it is a relational concept and exists in conjunction with other forms of capital: economic, symbolic and social (Bourdieu, 1977). As a result, cultural capital cannot be understood in isolation from the other forms of capital that constitute advantage and disadvantage in society. Social capital is generated through social processes between the family and society and is made up of social networks. Economic capital is wealth either inherited or generated from interactions between the individual and the economy. Finally, symbolic capital is manifested in individual prestige and personal qualities such as authority and charisma. In addition to their interconnection, Bourdieu describes a process in which one form of capital can be transformed into another. For instance, economic capital can be converted into cultural capital, while cultural capital can be readily into social capital.

Bourdieu's work on social and cultural capital describes the manner in which capital are transmitted and accumulated in ways that perpetuate social inequities (1977). According to his concept, the overall capital of different factions of the social classes is composed of differing proportions of the various forms of capital. Light (2005) explains it in the following manner,

Upper-class people acquire cultural capital in the family and in formal schooling. When the school curriculum reinforces the home curriculum, as it routinely does for children of

the affluent, students obtain additional access to their own culture in school. Conversely, when the school curriculum contradicts or subverts the home culture, as it does with the poor, immigrant, or ethnic minority children, students have to master a foreign culture at school while mastering their own at home. Even if they accomplish this difficult task, poor, immigrant, and ethnic minority children still do not learn everything they need to know to access the upper class later in life. Schools do not teach all the cultural knowledge needed for that access.

As a result, upper and middle class families are able to maintain class privilege and status across generations given that school and social structures reflect the norms and values of middle and upper classes (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977).

Bourdieu's work on the cultural and social reproduction of structures is often used to illustrate that students' cultural capital significantly influences college choices and educational achievement (Gandara, 2002b; McDonough, 1997). Bourdieu (1977) also uses the concept of habitus to refer to a deeply internalized system of outlooks, experiences and beliefs about the social world that an individual gets from their immediate environment and cannot be transmitted instantaneously by gift or inheritance, purchase or exchange. Using Bourdieu's concept, McDonough (1997) conducted in-depth case studies to examine the ways in which social class and high school guidance operations influence students' perceptions of opportunities for a college education. The study examined the everyday life experiences of 24 girls attending four high schools, a mix of high and low social class status contexts and high and low college guidance operations. Interviews were conducted with the student's parents, best friend, and counselors to determine the kind and amount of influence each of these people had on the

students. The following section summarizes the variety of ways parents in the study influenced the girls' decision-making processes as they chose colleges.

Data from the parent interviews show that parents offer varying levels of involvement to help their daughters make college choices (McDonough, 1997). Some parents, mostly those who attended college and have a high SES, provide direct active support. This type of support is characterized as being aware of tasks and accompanying deadlines, reading or editing application materials, securing private counseling and/or SAT preparation, and providing input on types of colleges/universities the student should apply to. Other parents, mostly those who have not attended college and/or come from a lower SES, may be supportive but not active due to their limited knowledge of the differences of a university's prestige or graduation rates.

McDonough's case studies reveal that the girls who attended more elite high schools were more likely to attend selective colleges because parents and high school resources directed them toward that end (1997). The evidence supports the claim that "a college choice habitus exists and is transmitted to individuals in organizational contexts as well as through families and social class communities" (McDonough, 1997, p.108). McDonough illustrates that, "Not all college-bound students face equal choices if they start out with different family and school resources that enable or constrain their educational and occupational mobility possibilities" (pg. 150). Families with high cultural capital are advantaged because they are able to provide clear strategies of how much and what kind of schooling each generation should have (McDonough, 1997). Parents also have the financial resources to supplement existing resources to help their children realize their college aspirations (Ganadra, 2002b; McDonough, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The parents of first-generation college students do not have these middle class

experiences to draw upon (Ganadra, 2002b; McDonough, 1997). As a result, guidance counselors and pre-collegiate outreach programs fill this void.

Guidance counselors and pre-collegiate outreach programs have the potential to equalize educational opportunities for traditionally underserved students. These sources can provide social and cultural capital essential for college success. It is important to highlight that this group of students are not deficit of cultural capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Low-income underrepresented students are competent decoders in a number of cultural domains within their communities (Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Yosso, 2006). However, their cultural resources are often unacknowledged.

Guidance Counselors

Currently, underrepresented youth are learning to decode the dominant culture via school guidance counselors and college preparation programs that explicitly transmit dominant socio-cultural values. Students who lack access to dominant cultural capital depend on their high school guidance counselors to receive information about educational opportunities. However, the type and quality of postsecondary assistance received by students varies by school type. Hawkins (2005) indicates that public high school counselors report spending 28 percent of their time on postsecondary counseling in comparison to 61 percent of private school counselors (Hawkins, 2005). High student-to-counselor ratios in public high schools put students at a disadvantage. Students attending public schools receive college counseling services that are approximately one-third of the services private school students receive (Hawkins, 2005). Once time per student is factored in, discrepancies in counseling services per student are accentuated. The data suggests

that the manner in which schools structure college guidance services affect the type of guidance students receive (McDonough, 1997).

The types of assistance students receive from guidance counselors either enhances or detracts from their cultural capital (McDonough, 1997; McDonough & Calderone, 2006). Schools send implicit and explicit messages that shape student dispositions to particular types of postsecondary institutions. A cross-case analysis of the effects of social class and its effect on postsecondary choices suggests that high school counseling programs structure opportunity following class-based patterns (McDonough, 1997). High schools serving students with similar class backgrounds exhibit important similarities in the ways they structure opportunity. Private schools mediate collective social class-consciousness (McDonough, 1997). The school setting, family, and friends reinforce the upper-middle class value of attending a “good college.” But students from low socioeconomic groups encounter inconsistent or contradictory signals from family, friends, and the school context (McDonough, 1997). The information and expectations low-income students receive channel the majority of students to 2-year colleges (McDonough, 1997).

Counselors transmit their perceptions via the information they present to students. A study exploring the ways in which class and cultural based dispositions of middle-class high school counselors and their low-income students suggests that differential class-based understandings over “the meaning of money” influence the type of information provided to students (McDonough, 1997; McDonough & Calderone, 2006). The study suggests that underrepresented students are sometimes discouraged from attending certain types of institutions based on counselor’s cultural misconceptions. The counselors in the study perceive community colleges as the only viable option for students needing to work to support themselves after high

school. In other words, “community college was best understood by counselors as a more desirable cost-savings measure as opposed to 4-year public options” (McDonough & Calderone, 2006). As a result, many low-income students fail to adequately assess their academic performance and apply and enroll in institutions that that match their academic ability (McDonough & Calderone, 2006). More importantly, counselors’ misconceptions about affordability may lead them to discourage low-income students from attending institutions that are a good fit and match (McDonough & Calderone, 2006). The findings support previous research suggesting that guidance counselors offer different levels of access when they are not aware of and responsive to the needs of both high-and-low socioeconomic students (McDonough, 1997). Given the declining numbers of underrepresented students in selective universities, educators and policy makers are placing increased hopes on early intervention programs (Gandara, 2002b).

College Preparation Programs

College preparation programs provide supplementary support services to students to fill in gaps where school structures have failed. The intent of the education system is to prepare and motivate students for postsecondary education. However, urban schools struggle to provide students with equal postsecondary access. College preparation programs address inequities in access. Swail & Perna (2001) summarize the role for college preparation programs as follows:

Some would argue that the ideals behind early intervention and college preparation programs are truly at the core of the American educational system- preparing students for lifelong learning and college opportunities. But that which takes the form of separate and

distinct early intervention and college outreach efforts for some students is often considered normal or average scholastic practice for others. (p. x)

This statement echoes research findings that social class structures opportunity (McDonough, 1997). What is routine for some can be missing or foreign for others. For instance, privileged groups leverage resources to maintain a competitive advantage in university admissions.

Students from upper middle class attend schools in which college related activities are entrenched into the school curricula (McDonough, 1997). In contrast, low-income students depend upon the sponsorship of intervention programs to provide this information.

Intervention programs come in many forms. The most common intervention programs are student-centered or school centered (Gandara, 2002b). Student centered programs provide talented youth from historically disadvantaged backgrounds with information and supplemental services that support college entrance. School-centered programs focus on changing school structures to help all students. However, the majority of programs are student-centered. Gandara (2002b) indicates that, “school-centered programs require intensive resources to have an impact, and require time to take hold” (p.85). Moreover, school-centered programs require cooperation from various stakeholders throughout the school. For these reasons, student-centered programs abound.

Student centered college preparation programs are not a recent phenomenon. Federal and state governments, as well as various nonprofit organizations fund outreach programs. The federal TRiO programs are the most prominent. But, the federal government does not act alone. States have also legislated similar programs. California is recognized for investing heavily in early intervention programs, spending approximately \$40 million each year (Swail & Perna, 2001). Community groups, non-profit organizations, and other programs have also followed suit.

Currently, there are more than one thousand programs operating nationally (Swail & Perna, 2001).

Despite the sizeable number of college preparation programs, little is known about program outcomes and effectiveness (Gandara, 2002b; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Research using national data sets to study the impact of federal (Myers & Schirm, 1999) and other types of college preparation programs (Horn & Chen, 1998; Horn & Nunez, 2000) have found small or no impacts on student performance. “It is difficult to know if they [college preparation programs] work, or for whom, and under what circumstances” (Gandara, 2002b, p.85). Since outreach programs come in all shapes and sizes, making sense of all programs has been a challenge (Gandara, 2002b; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002).

Although it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of college preparation programs (Gandara, 2002b; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002), research suggests that they provide important services to students (Swail & Perna, 2001). The College Board (2001) conducted a National Survey of Outreach Programs to help practitioners and researchers understand programs serving underrepresented students. The results reveal that 90 percent of programs promote college awareness, 79 percent provide workshops and classroom instruction, and 69 percent offer a parental component (Swail & Perna, 2001). Programs incorporate parental participation because research has demonstrated that it improves student learning whether the child is in preschool or preparing for college (Perna & Titus, 2005; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002).

Parental Involvement

Across social groups, parents are cited as being a critical source of college information for their children (McDonough, 1997; Perna & Titus, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Yet, most

low-income and Latino parents hold inaccurate beliefs about crucial information (Post, 1990; Tornatzky et al., 2002). A nationally representative telephone survey of 1,054 Latino parents reports that parents' factual college knowledge is significantly low (Tornatzky et al., 2002). Approximately 65 percent of parent respondents missed at least half of the survey items. It is important to note that knowledge deficits are greater among parents from lower incomes and educational backgrounds. The results indicate that 34 percent of low-SES parents with a high school education or less missed seven or eight questions on the college knowledge mini-test, in comparison to five percent of high-SES parents. The practical implication is that unless knowledge deficits are remedied, low-income first generation students are likely to miss crucial steps necessary for college entry (Tornatzky et al., 2002).

Little is known about racial/ethnic differences in the ways in which parent involvement promotes college enrollment (Auerbach, 2004; Perna & Titus, 2005; Tornatzky et al., 2002). A study (Perna & Titus, 2005) utilized data from the second and third follow-ups of the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) to examine the relationship between parental involvement and the college enrollment of African American and Latino students. The results indicate that the likelihood of enrolling in an institution of postsecondary education depends on parental involvement and the social capital accessed via social networks at the school (Perna & Titus, 2005). The analyses show that parental involvement influences students' college enrollment in 4-year institutions of higher education for Latino students, but not for African Americans. The results suggest that an effective approach to increase the college enrollment of underrepresented Latino/a students is to allocate resources to promote parental involvement (Perna & Titus, 2005).

The survey results also support research that highlights the unequal distribution of social and cultural capital among socioeconomic groups (Bourdieu, 1973; McDonough, 1997). Parents' knowledge of what it takes to prepare for college is mediated by their socioeconomic status (McDonough, 1997; Tornatzky et al., 2002). Middle-class and affluent parents know better than "their low SES counterparts, how, when, and why they should interact with the school about their child's educational progress" (McDonough, 1997, p.152). Working class parents do not have this knowledge base. As a result, they begin to prepare for college relatively late in their child's high school trajectory, have fewer resources and encounter more obstacles (Auerbach, 2004; McDonough, 1997; Tornatzky et al., 2002). Consequently "reproducing the structure of inequality from generation to generation" (Jun & Colyar, 2002, p.201). Working class parents must gain access to key social and cultural capital to guide and assist their children in gaining access to postsecondary education (Tornatzky et al., 2002).

Parents can engage in parent education programs to influence their child's college enrollment decisions. There are three typical types of programs: translated, culturally adapted, and culturally specific (Gorman & Balter, 1997). The first type, a translated program, is a traditional parent education program translated into a target population's native language. The intent of translated programs is to broaden the availability of information for groups that do not speak the dominant language. The culturally adapted program is designed to incorporate the values and cultural traditions of the target population. However, the culturally adapted program also maintains the basic outlook of the majority population (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). A key characteristic of a culturally specific program is that it is not a derivative of traditional program (Gorman & Balter, 1997; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). These programs are "built from the

ground up with the assumptions of those for whom the program has been developed” (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002, p.600).

Culturally specific programs that link social, and cultural frameworks are essential to the success of students of color (Jun & Colyar, 2005; Villalpando in press). However, culturally sensitive programs for students and their parents are sparse (Gorman & Balter, 1997). The literature emphasizes that poor and working class parents, like their children, lack college-relevant forms of cultural and social capital (Jun & Colyar, 2002; McDonough, 1997; Tornatzky et al., 2002). However, parents are not deficient of social cultural capital. The types of capital low-income parents provide is often unacknowledged because it is different than that offered by White middle-class parents (Ceja, 2004). Despite having lower incomes and educational levels, parents convey the importance of a college education in alternate ways (Ceja, 2004; Gandara, 1995).

Studies confirm that Latino/ parents have the ability to influence their children’s academic success with alternate forms of cultural capital (Ceja, 2004; Gandara, 1995). Gandara (1995) documented a cohort of 50 Mexican-American students who completed high status educations, doctoral or judicial degrees, in the nation’s elite universities. Using a semi-structured interview protocol, the researcher conducted 50 interviews with Latino/a students to explore the characteristics and experiences they encountered to survive poverty and disadvantage to become highly successful academic achievers. Participants’ parents did not complete a high school education or hold a job higher in status than skilled laborer. Despite this, the majority of parents shared many of the attitudes and dispositions that make up the cultural capital of the middle and upper classes (Gandara, 1995). Parents conveyed expectations through family stories, the creation of a history that would break the links between the parents’ current occupational status

and their children's future academic achievement. Gandara illustrates that family stories are a representation of the clearest form of cultural capital.

Similarly, Ceja (2004) examined the direct and indirect ways Mexican parents shape the college goals and aspirations of 20 Chicana seniors enrolled in an inner city high school in the Los Angeles area. The findings suggest that parental messages about the importance of education and Chicana students' self interpretation of their parents' lived experiences were important in the development of college aspirations and educational resiliency (Ceja, 2004; Gandara, 1995). Parents were able to directly transmit the importance of obtaining a college education through *consejos*, narrative advice, and storytelling (Ceja, 2004). Parents leveraged their economic, social, and occupational struggles to influence their children's educational pathways. Parents' lived experiences became stories of empowerment and motivation. The stories enabled Chicana students to view education as a vehicle for expanded opportunities and economic mobility. Despite parents' low educational and occupational attainment, "parents' marginal conditions situated them in a unique space that allowed them to understand that education [is] an important way of achieving economic and social mobility" (Ceja, 2004, p.357).

However parents' educational and occupational backgrounds did not allow them to speak specifically and substantively about types of colleges with their daughters. One respondent stated that her parents always talked about the importance of going to college, even if it meant going to the local community college (Ceja, 2004). To her parents, going to college was important. However, where she enrolled was not as important since enrollment in a two-year college represented a continuation of her education past high school (Ceja, 2004). Her experience raises an important question regarding the manner in which Latino parents view and understand the structure of higher education (Ceja, 2004). Does higher education represent a monolithic set of

institutions for Latino parents? My research project aims to answer this question since this might affect the role that parents play in the college choice process. Understanding the phenomenon can help create a Parent College Planning curriculum that enables families to maximize the college choice process to increase fit and match for underrepresented students.

Yosso (2005) similarly challenges earlier interpretations of cultural capital and introduces six forms of capital held by communities of color using a critical race theory lens. These forms of capital translate into community cultural wealth or the assets and resources that exist in the histories and lives of communities of color. (1) *Aspirational capital*- the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future or a positive outlook in the face of barriers; (2) *Linguistic capital*- the intellectual and social skills and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language; (3) *Familial capital*- cultural knowledge as nurtured through the family that engenders a sense of community, history, memory and cultural intuition; (4) *Social capital*- the social networks of people and community resources that stem from the other forms of capital. (5) *Navigational capital*- skills to maneuver through social institutions; and (6) *Resistance capital*- knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality. These forms of cultural wealth is said to transform education and empower communities of color (Yosso, 2005). It can be applied to develop methods to educate parents and empower them to utilize these assets to help their children succeed.

Parent Involvement Programs

Research demonstrates that Latino parents lack basic college knowledge to help their children navigate through the college choice process (Ceja, 2004; McDonough, 1997; Oliva, 2008; Tornatzky et al., 2002; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). As a result, schools serving Latino

populations have developed programs that encourage parental involvement to counter knowledge deficits. The following section describes the development and execution of two intervention programs that target middle school (Fann et al., 2009) and high school parents (Auerbach et al., 2004).

Intervention programs targeting middle school parents focus on providing essential college information for college preparation early in students' educational trajectories (Fann et al., 2009). The University of California, Los Angeles partnered with a school district (composed of 2 high schools, 4 middle schools, and 18 elementary schools) in a collaborative parent involvement project. The project was titled "Parent Knowledge and Participation in the Creation of a College Culture" to describe the experiences of Latino/a parents in becoming active participants in their child's college choice process (Auerbach et al., 2004). The collaborative was developed to address declining numbers of Latino/a students in the school district going to 4-year universities. The project focuses on the effects of parental involvement in the college planning and preparation of their middle school children (Auerbach et al., 2004). The project was designed to learn about parental needs in helping their children prepare for college. Therefore, parents were given the opportunity to provide input about the English and Spanish workshop series. Parental collaboration enabled researchers to identify cultural concerns specific to Latino/a parents. This information was used to refine content in the Spanish workshops to include information to address two parental concerns: campus safety and financial needs. Researchers added information about campus safety to address concerns about female children leaving the home. Secondly, they included information about the financial benefits of a college degree to address the financial need for children to work immediately after high school (Fann et al., 2009). The

modifications illustrate the need to go beyond language translation. Workshops that are relevant to Latino/a parents address their cultural concerns.

The collaborative nature of the parent workshop series illustrates that parental involvement programs are relevant to target populations when cultural concerns are addressed. Research suggests that Latino/a parents are influential in encouraging their children to enroll in institutions of postsecondary education (Ceja, 2004; Perna, 2006). However, current practices do not involve Latino/a parents in meaningful ways. Parental involvement remains an untapped resource (Fann et al., 2009). The Futures & Families (F&F) experimental college access program is an example of an intervention designed to maximize parental involvement in high school to “narrow the information gap and level the playing field for college access” (Auerbach et al., 2004, p. 126). Failure to include parents is analogous to missing potentially valuable players.

The F&F program is a parent component of a college access program at “Pacific High,” a racially and socioeconomically diverse high school in the Los Angeles area. The F&F program hosted 25 monthly bilingual meetings for parents with children enrolled in the Futures program (different from F&F) in sophomore through senior years to discuss college related topics. The focus of the program is to make college knowledge accessible for students and families of color to develop strategic ways to gain access to 4-year colleges.

Researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with a subsample of Latino/a parents participating in F&F meetings to document their beliefs, knowledge, and practices regarding college pathways. A review of parent surveys and interviews indicate that F&F meetings were the main source of college information for nearly all parents (Auerbach et al., 2004). F&F meetings conveyed the basic information using conventional informational presentations and handouts. However, the information was repeated using multiple formats to provide parents with

culturally meaningful information. Information was also presented via guest speakers, panel discussions, study groups, and small group debriefings (Auerbach et al., 2004). Parents reported that the personal testimony and stories of guest speakers were the most valuable aspect of the program (Auerbach et al., 2004). The results suggest that discussing issues with people who looked like them enabled parents to make sense of college information in relation to their own lives (Auerbach et al., 2004). Consequently, empowering parents “to take small, proactive steps to support college pathways that went beyond their usual focus on behind the scenes moral and emotional support” (Auerbach et al., 2004, p.134).

The parent interventions discussed above emphasize the need to provide college information and support to Latino families who aspire college for their children (Auerbach et al., 2004; Fann et al., 2009). Researchers are calling for intervention programs that encourage parental involvement (Auerbach et al., 2004; Fann et al., 2009; Gandara, 2002a, 2002b), particularly those that affirm their *cultural integrity* (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Accounting for family culture in intervention programs is essential to the success of students of color (Jun & Colyar, 2002) since culturally relevant programs nurture and empower participants (Auerbach et al., 2004; Fann et al., 2009; Villalpando et al, 2005). Rather than assimilate into dominant culture, programs can affirm racial and ethnic backgrounds to support a sense of active engagement and self-efficacy for parents and students. However,

[t]he challenge for those of us who work to improve the educational chances of underrepresented students lies in understanding just what information is most useful and relevant to parents, in discovering the most appropriate ways to reach parents, and in identifying the ways that parental involvement can become a consistent component of a school culture. (Fann et al., 2009, p.379)

This statement emphasizes the need to speak with, interview, and address the view, assumptions, understandings, beliefs, and concerns of low-income first generation students and their parents to close college access and degree gaps (Tierney & Venegas, 2009). Lessons from the middle and high school parent intervention programs affirm the need to invest in parental involvement rather than neglect this potential resource. Therefore, my research project capitalizes on the positive influences of parent involvement in increasing Latino/a student enrollment in 4-year institutions of postsecondary education to close college access and degree gaps.

Given the challenges that underrepresented students face in the college choice process, my research project aims to understand the role Latino/a parents play in the process. Understanding this phenomenon can help college access professionals. A college choice curriculum can provide low-income and racial/ethnic minority students with information and resources to guide their college choice process. Empower parents to actively support the college choice process by participating in college-planning workshops that provide information and resources on the importance of fit and match. The project aims to identify cultural concerns specific to the Latino/a population. The qualitative data from parent interviews will guide the development of a culturally relevant college access curriculum. The goal of the curriculum is to enable families to see the entire college opportunity structure and addresses their concerns as they navigate through the college choice process.

Chapter Summary

A college degree confers a wide range of personal and financial benefits to individuals and society. However, postsecondary opportunities are not equally distributed among racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic status and first generation college students. Participation in

2-year community colleges continues to be the most popular route of entry to postsecondary education for many low-income, first generation, and Latino students. A variety of federal, state, and institutional aid programs were created to encourage students to pursue postsecondary education. However, students are not taking advantage of available funding sources. Social, cultural, and ecological models suggest that structural, familial, and individual perceptions have a greater influence on low-income students' decision to enroll. For this reason, differences in the ways school counselors and parents support, encourage, and promote aspirations contribute to Latino/a students' disparate levels of postsecondary attainment.

Across social groups, parents are a critical source of college information. Yet, most low-income Latino/a parents lack basic college knowledge to help their children through their educational pathways. Culturally relevant parent involvement programs that aim to increase parents' college knowledge suggest that Latino/a parents can positively influence their child's enrollment in 4-year institutions of postsecondary education. This research study will delve into Latino/a students' and their parents' perceptions of factors that limit their participation in 4-year institutions of higher education. The data will identify cultural concerns specific to the Latino/a population to create a college access curriculum that addresses their concerns.

Chapter 3

Methods

In the past forty years, the percentage of young adults with a bachelor's degree has increased for all racial/ethnic groups across the United States. Despite the increases, Latino/a students have lower educational attainment rates than other racial/ethnic groups (Aud et al., 2010). College completion gaps suggest that: (1) race/ethnicity, (2) family income, and (3) parental education are three predominant factors that influence students' college enrollment decisions. First-generation, low-income minority students face a wide range of challenges during the college choice process that prevent them from attending universities that are a good fit for their needs. Students who "mismatch" are less likely to persist and graduate after college; moreover, students at less selective institutions graduate at lower rates than those from more selective institutions (Bowen et al., 2009).

Students make college choices from implicit and explicit messages they receive from their social and organizational networks (McDonough, 1997). Parents' knowledge, attitudes, and expectations about college are influential in the college choice process (McDonough, 1997). Choosing a college is a complex and confusing process. It requires knowledge about differences in institution types and indicators of institutional quality. For this reason, this study focused on the role, if any, Latino/a parents play in the college search and choice process and the ways parents participate and influence student choice via their participation in a college access program via their participation in the Bright Futures college preparation program. Studies have concluded that Latino/a parents strongly value education (Ceja, 2004). Parents emphasize finishing high school and receiving a college education- though not necessarily an elite one. Therefore, this study also examined Latino/a parents' knowledge and understanding of the higher

education structure. To document this, I conducted semi-structured in depth phenomenological interviews to probe for awareness and familiarity with the structure of higher education. In-depth semi-structured interviews were appropriate because they help us better understand the lived experiences of Latino/a families as they make college-going decisions (Creswell, 2009). The focus of inquiry was on the meaning and lived experiences of Latino families, the essence of phenomenological studies (Patton, 2001). Given the importance of fit and match to student success and degree attainment, the interview findings were used to determine resources parents need and develop a culturally relevant Parent College Planning curriculum that provides information, guidance, and support to navigate the college choice process. This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Latino/a parents define the roles they play in their child's college search and choice process?
2. Given the role they play, how do Latino/a parents influence and participate in the college search and choice process?
3. How do Latino/a parents' define and perceive the higher education structure?
4. How does the Bright Futures program help Latino/a parents support their children through the college choice process?

Research Design

Latinos represent the largest minority group and have the fastest projected population growth in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2013). However, there is minimal literature on Latino parents. The few studies available rely on students' perceptions of their parents' support during high school and college (Gandara, 1995; Ortiz, 2011). This study is a companion

piece to these studies by examining the perspectives of Latino/a parents participating in a college access program. A phenomenological research approach allowed me to explore the ways in which Latino/a parents work with their children about college going. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with Latino/a parents to understand their views and understanding of the higher education structure. A phenomenological approach is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual. The method was appropriate to answer the research questions because it captures parents' perspectives, not their children's perceptions of their behavior or the meaning researchers attach to the research (Creswell, 2009). The information and perceptions are represented from the perspective of the research participants. The in-depth interviews included open-ended questions to understand and capture the richly descriptive accounts of Latino/a parents not obtained through surveys and quantitative methods (Merriam, 2009). In other words, in depth interviewing allows us to understand what Latino families experience during the college choice process as directly as possible for ourselves (Patton, 2001).

Site Selection

Purposeful sampling is appropriate for this study because the individuals selected for participation can provide information to answer the research questions (Maxwell, 2005). For this reason, a non-profit college preparation program in a Southern California city was the site for this qualitative research project. This site was chosen primarily because its demographics match the three predominant factors: (1) race/ethnicity, (2) family income and (3) parental education levels identified by the literature as factors influencing students' college enrollment decisions.

The city, high schools, and program demographics are presented to illustrate this point. First, the U.S. Census Bureau 2010 reports the city as having a high percentage of Latinos/as. The racial/ethnic make-up is 33 percent African American, 65 percent Latino and four percent other. Second, the site is located in a predominately low-income community. Approximately 80 percent of families in the city meet the U.S. Department of Education low-income guidelines. Third, a large percentage of adults living in the city, 93 percent, have not earned a baccalaureate degree. The data suggests that a significant number of children come from families in which neither parent holds a bachelor's degree.

Participants for the study were recruited from a college access program that serves two of three comprehensive high schools within the city's public school district. The two high schools: (1) Birch High School and (2) Nutwood High School are located within seven miles of each other. However, the schools' demographics are slightly different than that of the city. Both High Schools serve a predominately Hispanic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The ethnic/racial demographics are strikingly similar at both schools. Approximately 79 and 80 percent of students are Latino/a while 18 and 17 percent are African American at Birch and Nutwood respectively. Second, approximately 74 percent (Birch H.S.) and 86 percent (Nutwood H.S.) of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Third, only 7 percent of adults hold a bachelor's degree or higher; this suggests that a large percentage of students are first-generation college students.

The total college enrollment rate at each high school is approximately 53 percent. The percentage falls below the national postsecondary enrollment rate of 75 percent. Table 3.1

, illustrates the high schools' number of and percentage of high school graduates, percentage of students who enrolled in 2 and 4-year colleges as well as the total college going

rates. The data illustrate that the high schools graduate a little over half of the graduating class. Birch H.S. graduates 64 percent while Nutwood H.S. graduates 60 percent. Similar to national data, the majority of graduates enroll in 2-year colleges. Forty-six percent of graduating seniors from Birch H.S. and 36 percent of Nutwood H.S. enrolled in a 2-year college. Only eight percent of graduating seniors from Birch H.S. and 17 percent from Nutwood H.S. enrolled in 4-year colleges and universities.

Table 3.1
Target High School Graduation & College Enrollment Rates

High School	Graduates	2-yr College Enrollment	4-yr College Enrollment
Birch H.S	64%	46%	8%
Nutwood H.S	60%	36%	17%
Source: California Department of Education 2011			

A closer look at freshman admission eligibility requirements for enrollment into California’s two public postsecondary 4-year institutions of higher education can help explain the low enrollment rates. The UC and CSU systems require that students complete a “rigorous curriculum,” sequence of 15 courses known as the “A-G requirements.” The “A-G requirements” include completion of: (a) two years of History/Social Science; (b) four years of English (Honors & Advance Placement courses are recommended); (c) three years/four recommended of Mathematics; (d) two years/three recommended of Laboratory Science; (e) two years/three recommended of a Language other than English; (f) one year of Visual & Performing Arts and;

(g) one year of a College Prep Elective. At Birch H.S. approximately 14 percent of graduating seniors complete a rigorous course of study in comparison to 16 percent of Nutwood H.S.

Various factors contribute to the low percentage of students completing a “rigorous curriculum.” The schools have received the lowest ranking on the Academic Performance Index (API). The API measures the academic performance and growth of schools based on a variety of tests. The statewide ranking of schools is set from one to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 the highest. Both schools have an API score of one. In addition to low API scores, the schools have a low percentage of students successfully passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The CAHSEE scores are an indicator for measuring Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and are typically 20 percent of the API scores. The CASHEE is a two-part test linked to academic content standards in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. The percentage of students passing the CAHSEE is below the state average of 59 percent in English/Language Arts and 56 percent in mathematics. The CAHSEE English/Language Arts scores at Birch H.S. and Nutwood H.S. are 35 percent and 33 percent respectively. While the CAHSEE Mathematics scores are 27 percent and 33 percent.

Another contributing factor is high student to counselor ratios. The average student to counselor ratio at both schools is approximately 500:1. The ratio exceeds the ideal ratio of 100 to one and the acceptable national ratio of 250:1 as advanced by the American School of Counselors Association (Hawkins & Lutz, 2005). The high ratios leave counselors with inadequate time to work one-on-one with students to assist with the college choice process. The lack of intensive college counseling creates a primary unmet need for low-income, potential first generation college students who have the desire to enroll in college. As a result, college

preparation programs have provided services to these low achieving schools in an attempt to provide supplementary support services that fill in gaps where school structures have failed.

There are a total of six federal and state college preparation programs that provide services to students at Birch and Nutwood High Schools. Participants for this study were recruited from the “Bright Futures” college preparation program. The Bright Futures program has been selected as the site for this study primarily because of its demographics. First, it services a high percentage (95 percent) of Latino students. Second, 100 percent of participants come from families that meet low-income guidelines. Third, 100 percent of participants have the potential to be the first in their family to pursue postsecondary education. In other words, 100 percent of participants are categorized as low-income and potential first generation college students, not a common phenomenon among most college preparation programs.

Students are selected to participate in the Bright Futures program because they intend and demonstrate motivation to attend postsecondary institution of higher education upon high school graduation. Students are usually recruited during their 9th and 10th grade and receive extensive personalized academic and college counseling services year round until high school completion. For this reason, approximately 98 percent of students pass the English and Math sections of the CASHEE, complete a rigorous program of study, and graduate high school on time. Of the students who graduate, approximately 92 percent enroll in a program of postsecondary education. However, 62 percent of students enroll in 2-year colleges, 23 percent enroll in a CSU and 15 percent enroll in a UC campus. Students in the Bright Futures program are academically prepared to and often eligible for admission at 4-year universities. However, the program does not currently track whether students “undermatch.” Interviews with parents of students enrolled in the Bright Futures Program may help answer the study’s research questions.

Interview Subjects

This study was particularly interested in looking at the college search and choice process from the perspective of Latino/a parents participating in the Bright Futures Program. The goal of the study was to better understand parents' perspective since research in this area is limited. The program was selected for the study because most families meet two or more of the at-risk factors, highlighted by the literature, that contribute to the inequity of access and widening college attainment gaps. This type of purposeful sampling has the potential to provide information-rich cases of Latino/a low-income families and their experiences in preparing potential first-generation college students for college entry.

There are a total of 50 students in the Bright Futures Program. Of these, 45 have self-identified as Hispanic or Latino/a, four are African American and one is Pacific Islander. The study recruited 30 parents from the eligible recruitment pool. Additional participants were not added to reach data saturation. The study did not seek gender parity. The program does not track family composition. Information on family composition was asked in the participant questionnaire to understand home-related factors impacting college decisions.

The Project

The potential difference between parents' role and actions inspired this research project. Research suggests that Latino/a parents have the highest college aspirations for their children, but they lack basic college knowledge to help their children navigate the college choice process (Ceja, 2004; McDonough, 1997; Oliva, 2008; Tornantzky et al., 2002; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). Therefore, the goal of this study was to understand the role Latino/a parents play in the college choice process and the specific ways Latino/a parents participate and influence student choice

via their participation in the Bright Futures program. Moreover, it also examined Latino/a parents' knowledge and understanding of the higher education structure. Understanding of the higher education structure helped determine whether the type of college/university their child attends is important to Latino/a parents or if it is not as important to them as to where they go as long as it represents a continuation of their child's education beyond high school. The data collected was utilized to identify ways to involve parents and legal guardians in their child's career development and college choice process. Moreover, it assessed Latino/a parents' needs to contribute to the creation of culturally relevant series of Parent College Planning workshops. It also examined ways in which schools, outreach programs, and other practitioners can empower Latino/a parents and guardians to actively support the college choice process to help their children realize their educational aspirations.

Data Collection Methods

Parent Interviews. Before commencing interviews, the interview protocol and participant questionnaire was piloted with 2-3 Latino/a parents to test for continuity, clarity, length of time required for completion, and to assess the effectiveness of the interview questions in accurately answering the research questions. Questions to the interview protocol were modified or eliminated when necessary to reduce ambiguity or vagueness.

Once the interview protocol was ready, a letter in English and Spanish was mailed to potential participants to invite them to partake in the research project. The letter offered a brief explanation of the project, participation criteria, types of questions asked, and the honorarium for their participation. Interested subjects were requested to contact the researcher to schedule a 30-45 minute interview appointment. Parents were not be pressured to participate.

Before the interview, participants were given participant consent forms giving permission to participate in the study. Participants were also informed of their right to skip questions and/or end the interview at any point without foregoing the honorarium. All informed consent forms were kept in a secure location, locked in a file cabinet, separate from the data. Parents were asked to provide a pseudonym to protect their identity, remain anonymous and to assure confidentiality. The interviews were digitally recorded with the permission from participants to document all interviews. The interviews were conducted in English or Spanish contingent on the participant's language preference. All interviews were conducted in the offices of the college access program at a time most convenient to participants. I used a semi-structured open-ended interview protocol to probe deeper into parents' contextual understanding (Maxwell, 2005). This interviewing method gave parents the opportunity to volunteer additional information about their views and opinions. The interview protocol probed for information on parents' perceptions and views. Qualitative interview protocol produces richly descriptive data (Merriam, 2009) not captured by surveys or quantitative measures. Participants were given the opportunity to review, edit, and erase recordings of their research participation. Interviewees were thanked for their time with a crisp \$10 bill. As an incentive to participate, parents also had the opportunity to enter in a drawing to win an iPad mini.

Questionnaire. Participants were asked to complete a brief questionnaire after the interview. Each questionnaire was labeled with an identifying number that was linked it with the pseudonym from interview data. Confidentiality was maintained by storing the list of pseudonyms and identifying numbers in a password protected computer.

The questionnaire took approximately 5 minutes to complete and included basic descriptive information regarding gender, ethnicity, country of origin and formal education,

highest level of education completed, family income and composition. The questionnaire data rendered a composite representation of the participant pool and served as a reference for crosschecking interview data to triangulate emerging findings (Merriam, 2009). The goal of methodology triangulation, the combination of two different methods of data collection, is to obtain data sets that complement one another (Merriam, 2009). Thus, increase data validity since both approaches yield similar or corresponding results. On the other hand, inconsistencies suggest that other (unaccounted) variables may explain results.

Data Analysis

Consistent with qualitative methodology, the researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). Prior to conducting interviews, I explored past experiences that provide background data through which the audience can better understand the topic, participants, and the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). The field note brought awareness of personal prejudices, viewpoints and assumptions (Merriam, 2009). This "epoche" process was used to help monitor the infiltration of past experiences into the data analysis (Merriam, 2009). This process creates multiple strategies of validity to create reader confidence in the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2009).

Analysis of recorded interviews took place after completing each interview. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Interviews conducted in Spanish were translated to English. Translated interviews were also verified for accurateness to ensure participant responses maintained their intended meaning.

I created Excel spreadsheets for each question asked during the interview to organize the data in an easy to read manner. This allowed me to sort through data easily during data analysis.

A preliminary qualitative codebook (see Appendix C) with a list of predetermined codes that borrow categories from the literature was used to code the data (Creswell, 2009). The codebook was structured with the names of codes in one column, a definition of codes in another column, and then specific instances in which the code was found in the transcripts (Creswell, 2009). Codes were reapplied to new data segments each time an appropriate theme/pattern was encountered during the coding process (Creswell, 2009).

The preliminary codebook evolved and changed during the data analysis process based on close data analysis. Codes were added or deleted from the preliminary codebook as data was organized into patterns, categories, and themes (Creswell, 2009). The final master codebook included all emerging codes from interviews. All major findings are included in Chapter 4. Quotes from participant interviews support the findings of the study. These excerpts contribute to the rich descriptive nature of the study (Creswell, 2009).

The goal of the first research question was to gain a baseline understanding of the role Latino/a parents perceive to play in the college choice process. The literature is clear; Latino parents have high college aspirations for their children (Ceja, 2004; McDonough, 1997). However, Latino/a students' have the lowest educational attainment rates of all racial/ethnic groups throughout the nation (Aud et al., 2010). The research suggests that the influence of parents on students' decision process must be better understood. Categories pertaining to the role they play are anticipated to fall under (1) direct (McDonough, 1997) and (2) indirect support (Yosso, 2006).

Given the role, if any, Latino/a parents play in their child's college search and choice process, the second research question examines the specific ways, if any, Latino/a parents direct and influence choice. I borrow from McDonough (1997) and Yosso's (2006) categories

pertaining to specific actions parents engage in to influence choice. Therefore, the interview protocol includes open-ended questions that research literature suggests fall in several themes that include academic, home life and administrative direct support (McDonough, 1997), or aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational and resistance indirect support (Yosso, 2006). These specific actions are believed to influence student choice.

The study also aimed to understand Latino/a parents' knowledge of the higher education structure. Participants were asked about specific knowledge related to the higher education structure i.e. knowledge of selectivity, admissions requirements, prestige, rankings, degree types awarded, and academic reputation. The data was coded to reflect parents' knowledge.

An additional question not related to the research questions was included in the interview protocol since participation in the Bright Futures Program may function as an intervening variable, a variable that helps explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2009). In other words, level of participation in the program can explain the relationship between parents and their level of participation in their child's college choice process. It is possible that greater participation in the program has a direct effect on the level of involvement with their child. If this is true, participation in the program may explain the relation or provide a causal link between the other variables. To account for this possibility, question #11 was included in the interview protocol (see Appendix A). This question may help understand the extent their involvement in the program increased their knowledge and understanding of college going and whether this prepared them to assist their children in greater ways.

Parent participation in the workshops was used to assist in the evaluation of findings. For the purposes of this study, parents were divided into two groups: low and high engagement based on the number of parent workshops they attended. A review of parent attendance records from

the year 2012 through 2015 shows that participation ranges from zero to eight. Approximately 21 parents participated in zero to four workshops, while the remaining 24 parents participated in five to eight workshops. Parents who participated in four or less workshops were grouped in the low participation category and those who participated in five or more were grouped in the high participation category. Categorizing parents in these groups helped evaluate the ways in which the two groups of parents engage with their children around college going through their relationships with the Bright Futures Program. It is important to note that the classifications are not intended to criticize parents' participation levels; it is merely a classification for comparative purposes. The program offers four parent workshops each academic school year.

The questionnaire data was inputted into Excel. This secondary source of data allowed me to sort parents' demographic information, education, family size and income to gain a broader and secure understanding of the issues under investigation. The descriptive statistics were used to triangulate findings; thus increase validity and reliability (Merriam, 2009) and reduce the risk that conclusions reflect self-reported or other systematic biases or limitations of phenomenological qualitative studies (Maxwell, 2005).

Ethical Issues

Before the interview, parents were given informed consent forms to notify them of their rights and responsibilities. This included the purpose of the study, the benefits, confidentiality, length of interview and any follow-up contact that might be required. Participants were also notified of their right to decline participation at any time. The unique practitioner-researcher duality can raise practical difficulties with respect to participation. I have the obligation to treat

participants as autonomous agents. Therefore, parents were not coerced to participate in the project. Their decision to participate or decline participation was respected.

First, ensured participants understood that the research was voluntary and apart from what parents are required to do as participants in the college preparation program. Their children are not dependent on me for grades or resources and cannot be terminated from the program for failing to participate in the study. I requested participant consent and honored their decision to decline participation without fear of repercussions to their children. I secured data that may identify individual participants at various stages (data collection, processing, storage and dissemination) of the research project to ensure confidentiality. Participants were requested to create pseudonyms to protect their identity. A document linking pseudonyms with participants' identifying information was locked in a file cabinet. Other sensitive materials such transcripts, tapes, field notes and other materials were kept under lock and key. Materials saved on the computer were password protected. Only the primary researcher has access to identifying information.

Secondly, to minimize parent reactivity, I clearly explained my role as a UCLA researcher and reiterate that there are no right or wrong answers. I also stressed the importance of giving their honest opinions.

Finally, I monitored my own bias prior to and during data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings. I am a first-generation college student. I need to constantly remind myself not to compare my college choice process with the experiences of my study participants. Moreover, I have worked with several college preparation programs throughout my professional career. I have encountered cases in which parents encourage their children to matriculate at the local community college even though they are eligible to attend a 4-year university. The

anecdotal evidence suggests that parents of low income and first generation students are less likely to distinguish between institution types and quality. I was cautious of selecting data that confirmed any preconceived observations, judgments, assumptions and notions since it can bias the manner in which the data was analyzed and reviewed.

Ensuring Credibility and Trustworthiness

I currently serve as the Program Manager of the college preparation program that served as the project's site. My dual role as an employee-researcher was addressed as a threat to the trustworthiness of this qualitative study. Parents may have been inclined to positively skew their responses or respond in a less honest way. To safeguard against this potential threat, I stressed my role as a UCLA doctoral student conducting research. I emphasized the importance of providing honest responses to increase the credibility of the study. I also explained what parents would be asked to do (interview, answer a short questionnaire, and answer follow-up questions if necessary).

A second threat to the study is its generalizability. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the larger population of Latino/a, low-income, and first-generation students.

I took the following steps to guard against researcher bias and enhance the study's trustworthiness. The interview protocol was standardized. I recorded and transcribed all interviews. I used specific coding procedures (described in the data analysis methods section) to systematically analyze the data. This process enabled me to support the results of the study and guard against insufficient evidence to support conclusions.

Chapter Summary

The limited research available on Latino/a parents, particularly as it relates to their role in the college search process, encouraged me to focus my efforts on this topic. Currently there is a gap in the literature on whether the type of college/university children enroll is important to Latino/a parents. My research, data collection, and analysis, adds to the literature and outlines strategies to better service this population.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

The goal of this study was to examine Latino/a parent's perceived role in their child's college search and choice process and the specific ways they participate in the process via their participation in the Bright Futures program. Moreover, it also examined Latino/a parents' knowledge and understanding of the higher education structure. As suggested by relevant research (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Yosso, 2005), Latino parents in this study provided non-direct support, through advice and verbal encouragement, to their children. At the same time, many Latino/a parents did not understand the higher education structure and how the college system works. However, Latino/a parents in the study want their children to receive a college education from a 4-year college instead of a community college. The findings provide vivid first-hand accounts from Latino/a parents.

Data for this qualitative research study was collected from two primary sources: parent interviews and a participant questionnaire. The information collected from the participant questionnaire is presented in this chapter to provide a collective profile of the participants. The participant questionnaire was also used to crosscheck interview data to triangulate emerging findings (Merriam, 2009).

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section presents the collective summary of the research participants as generated by the participant questionnaire. The second section presents findings with regards to preparation for college. Section three presents findings about college search decisions. Finally, section four presents findings about family's involvement in the Bright Futures program.

Summary of Research Participants

A. Participant Pool Profile

Data collection commenced in the spring 2015 semester. A total of 45 Latino/a families were mailed a research invitation letter to participate in the study. A total of 28 families scheduled an interview to participate in the research project. Two participants did not attend their scheduled interviews, as a result a total of 26 families were interviewed for this study. Of these, 22 were conducted with one parent; three with both parents and; one interview was conducted with a mother and her older daughter who also offered her perspective. A total of 30 individuals were interviewed. However, the data is presented as 26 families since the responses of those who participated in pairs were in agreement. The interviews were conducted in English or Spanish depending on the individuals' language preference. Of the 26 families, 22 chose to be interviewed in Spanish, three in English and one in both English and Spanish. All Spanish interviews were transcribed verbatim, translated and verified for accuracy. The findings are presented in English with key ideas presented in Spanish for emphasis.

All families completed a questionnaire collecting demographic information about the parents' ethnicity, highest level of education, family size and income to develop a profile of the participant pool. The participant questionnaire is summarized first to serve as a reference point in the discussion of findings. The participant pool can be summarized as follows: A total of 24 females and 6 males were interviewed for this study. All families completed the parent questionnaire and self-identified as Hispanic/Latino. Of these, 22 identified as Mexican, two as Mexican-American, two as Guatemalan, three as Salvadorian, and one as Nicaraguan. Table 4.1 summarizes the participant questionnaire in regards to parents' country of formal education. The data reveals that 19 mothers and 17 fathers received formal education in their home country,

while 7 mothers and 6 fathers received formal education in the U.S. Two fathers did not receive any type of formal schooling and information was not provided for one additional father.

Table 4.1

Parent’s country of formal education

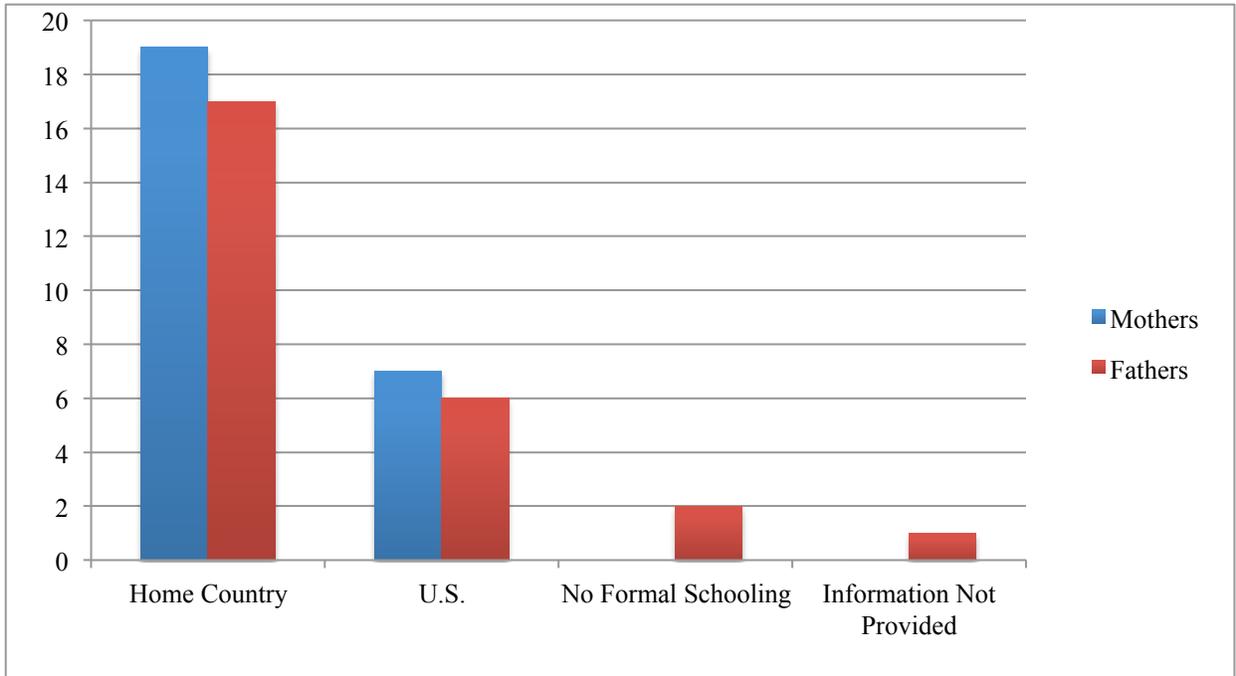


Table 4.2 summarizes parent’s highest level of educational attainment. The data illustrates that approximately 64 percent of participants, 19 mothers and 12 fathers, did not obtain a high school diploma. Participants who completed high school include four mothers and two fathers. Of those who received an education beyond high school, two are mothers who received their associate’s degree and one who completed a bachelor’s degree in the U.S.; two fathers who completed their General Education Development (GED) certificate, three fathers who received some college, three fathers who received their bachelor’s degree in their home country, and information was not available for the remaining two fathers. There is limited

literature on whether degrees, from four-year universities or professional schools from non-American universities exclude students from the first-generation college student classification. This may be attributed to the fact that not all foreign degrees are accepted in the U.S. and higher education institutions have different guidelines to classify students as first generation college students. Nevertheless, the data illustrates that the majority of parents, 98 percent, have not completed a bachelor’s degree in the U.S. Information about parental education levels are important because students are less likely to enroll in college immediately after high school if their parents do not hold a bachelor’s degree (Choy, 2001).

Table 4.2

Parent Education Levels

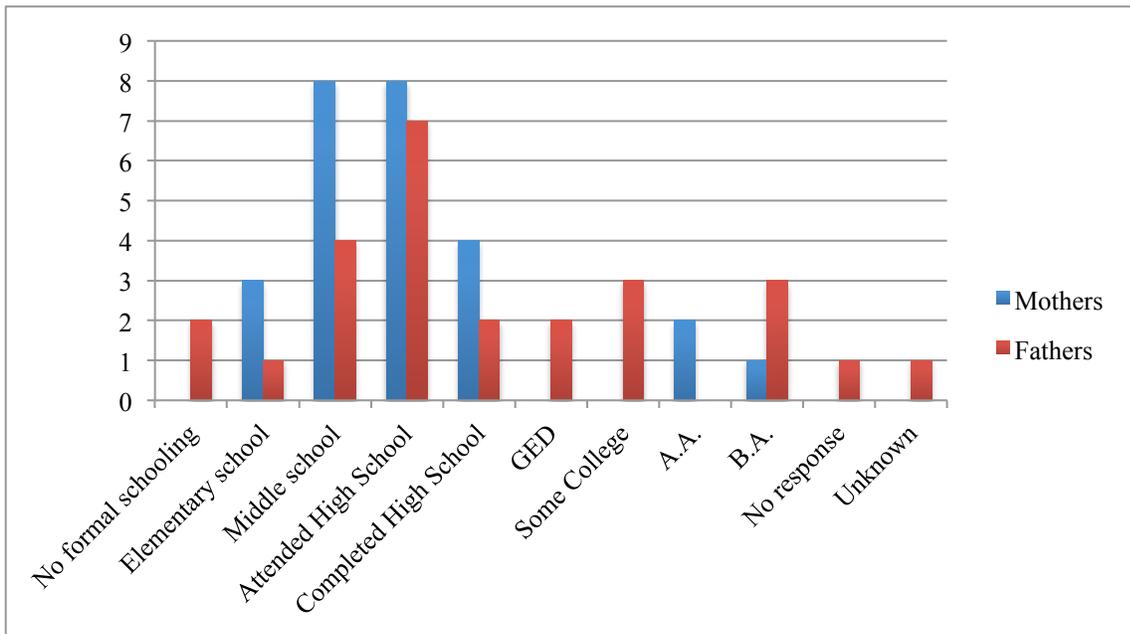


Table 4.3 summarizes the household information in regards to marital status. Information on marital status was collected because students from single parent households have increased

odds of dropping out of high school (Horn, 1997). Overall, five participants reported their marital status as single, 18 as married, two as divorced, and one as separated.

Table 4.3

Participants' Marital Status

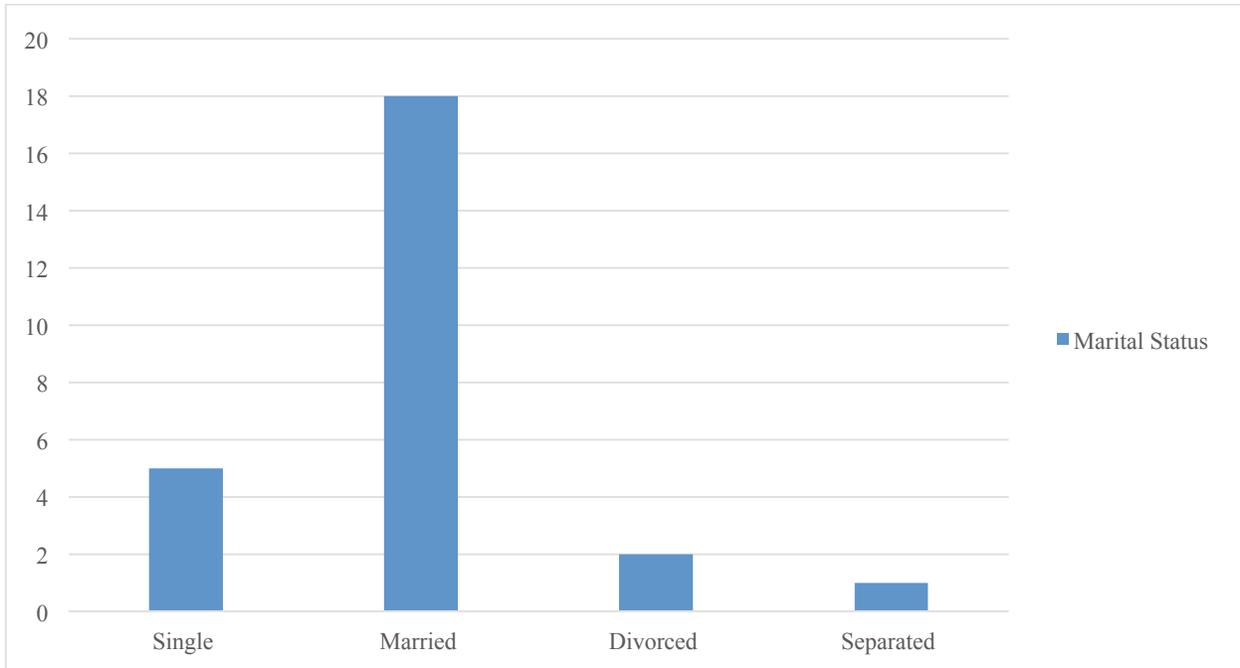


Table 4.4 summarizes the participants' self-reported household income. Information on family income was collected because data suggests that it impacts student's ability to attend postsecondary institutions of higher education since low SES students enroll in college at lower rates than high SES students (Hawkins & Lutz, 2005; Kane, 1995; Pell Institute, 2005). Overall, approximately 80 percent of participants report having a household income below \$40,000. The eighty percent is comprised of 11 families with a household income below \$19,999, six with income below \$29,999 and four with income below \$39,999.

Table 4.4

Participants' Household Income

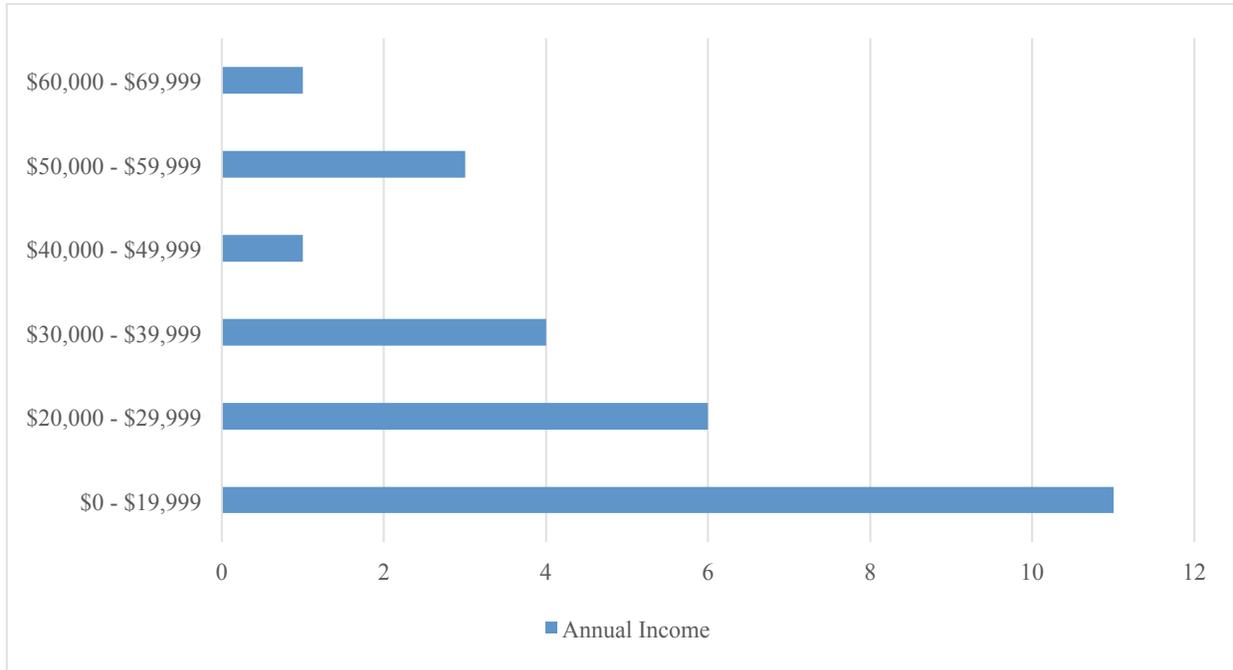
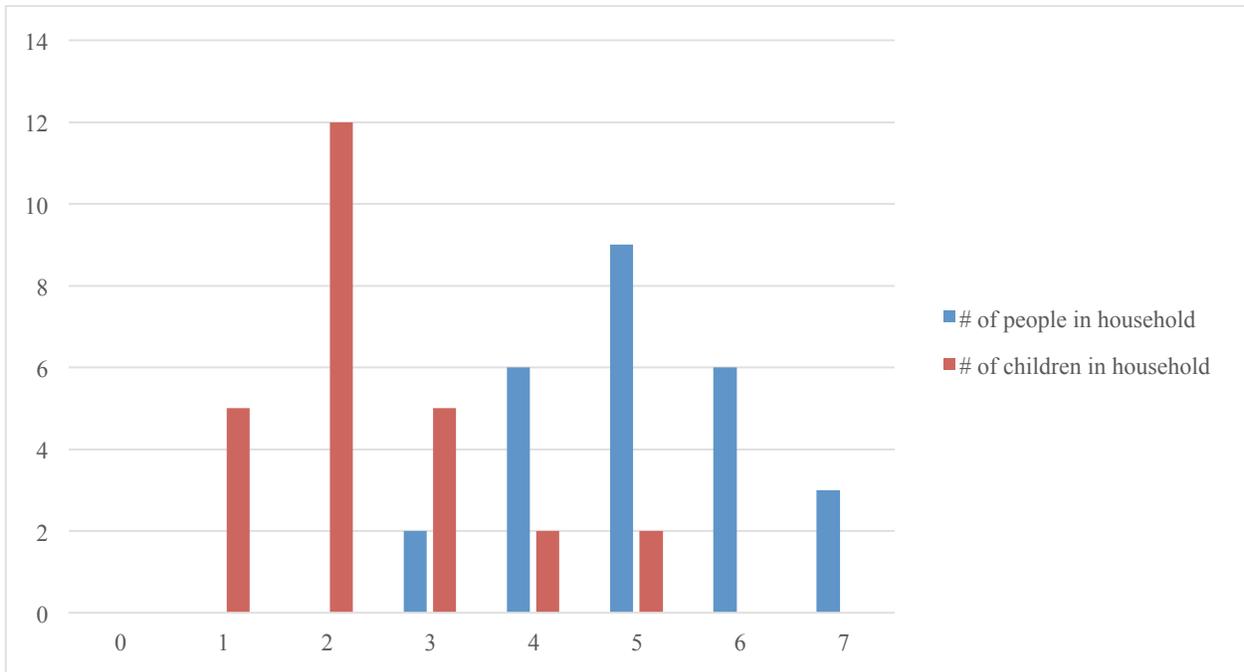


Table 4.5 summarizes family's household composition. The participant questionnaire reveals that family composition ranges from three to seven people in the household. Nine families fall into the most frequent occurring category of five people in the household. There is a tie in the second most frequent number of people in the household with six families reporting either four or six members. Twelve families report having two children in the household, five report having one child and five report having three children.

Table 4.5

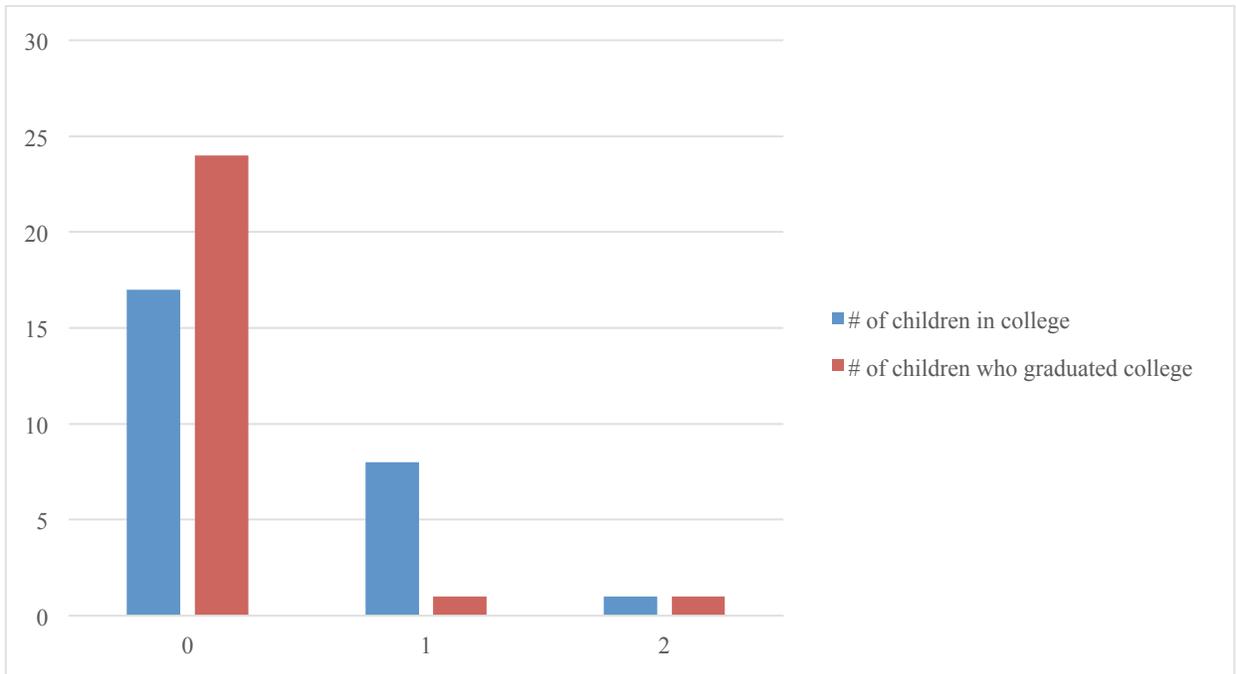
Family's Household Composition



Moreover, seventeen families report having no children enrolled in college, eight report having one, and one reports having two children in college. Twenty-four participants report having no children graduate from college, while one reports having one college graduate and one reports having two college graduates. The data indicate that approximately 92 percent of families do not have children who have enrolled or graduated from college, thus indicating that they have no experience with the process of choosing colleges with their children. In addition, the data also suggests that students do not have older siblings who can assist with the college search and choice process because they will be the first in the household to pursue a college degree.

Table 4.6

Children in College & College Graduates



B. Parent Participation Categories and Data Analysis

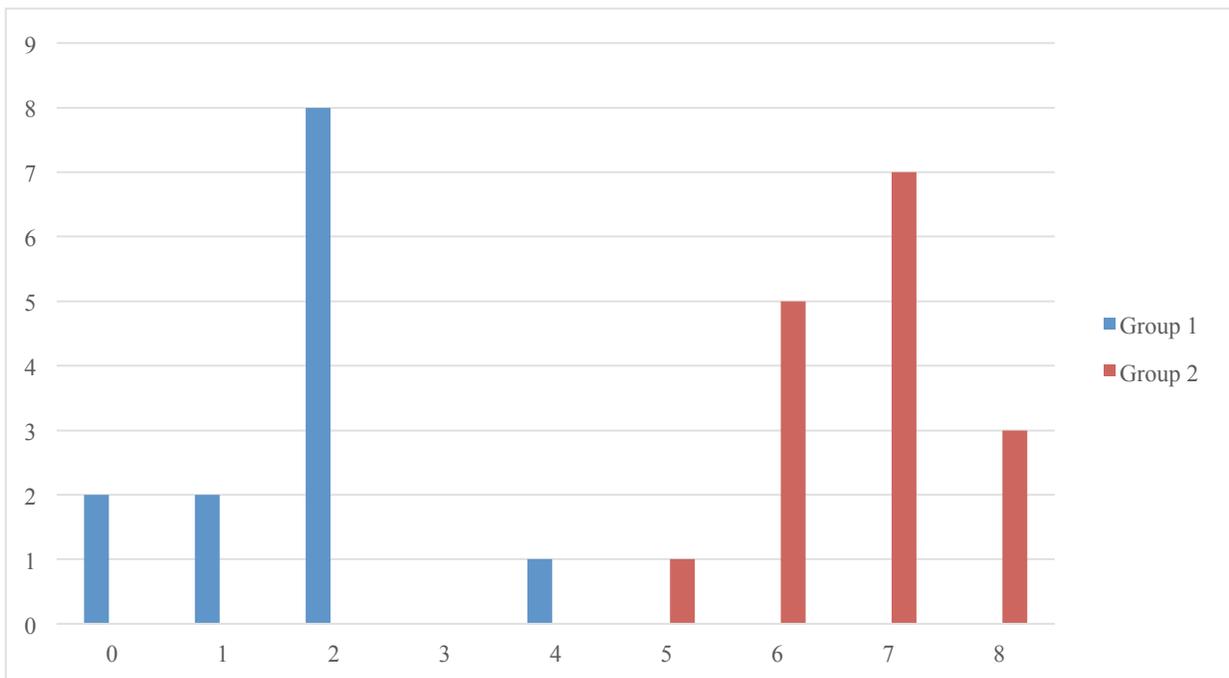
Attendance records from parent workshops were used to create two parent groups with varying levels of engagement in the Bright Futures parent workshops. Group #1, low participation, was composed of parents who participated in zero to four workshops. Group #2, high participation, was composed of parents who participated in five to eight workshops. Of the 26 families who participated in the study, 13 were classified in the low engagement group and 13 in the high engagement group. Thus, an equal number of families are represented by each group category.

Table 4.7 shows a breakdown of the number of workshops attended by families in each group. Eight of the families in the low participation group participated in two workshops. Two families attended one workshop, two did not participate in any workshops and, one additional

family attended four workshops. Disaggregate data for the high participation group indicates that seven families participated in seven workshops, five families participated in six workshops, three families participated in eight workshops, and one family participated in five workshops.

Table 4.7

Number of workshops attended by group



The groupings were used in two ways: first, all responses on the interview protocol were analyzed to create thematic groupings. Then, each theme was separated as belonging to Group #1 or Group #2. This process was repeated to analyze responses to each question in the interview protocol. Responses from the low and high participation groups were used for comparison purposes. However, differences in the ways in which the groups engage with their children around college were only noted in four areas: (1) direct academic support, (2) awareness about ways to finance a college education, (3) expectation to work while in college, and (4) knowledge

about the higher education structure. A discussion of differences is only provided for these sections.

C. Importance of a College Education

The first question in the interview protocol was a question about the importance of a college education to give families the opportunity to provide a verbal tour about their feelings and understanding of the topic. The benefit of the question is to get respondents talking in a fairly focused way while also putting respondents at ease (Leech, 2002). More importantly, it provides insight of the value parents place on a college education. All 26 families indicated that *“una educación universitaria es muy importante para tener éxito en la vida”* (a college education is very important for success in life) because it confers better jobs (18, Group #1= 10 and Group #2= 8), a better future (6, Group #1= 2 and Group #2= 4) and teaches children to become independent (2, Group #2= 2). Lorena said the following:

For me, college is really important because it's needed to succeed in life. More than anything a college education is something you can leave behind for your children so they can excel because in this day and time if you don't have an education you will earn minimum wage and that is not a solid foundation.

Lorena states that a college education is the only legacy she can leave for her children because she does not possess personal property her children can inherit. Although not implicitly stated, Lorena is speaking of the intergenerational benefits conferred by a college education. She understands that college graduates are healthier, wealthier and generally have children who are better educated than the children of parents who do not hold a college degree. Moreover, Lorena

also understands that college education confers access to economic mobility, a personal benefit, through higher paying jobs that provide stability and financial security.

Emily expressed the importance of a college education in the following way:

A college education is so important in everything, but primarily financially, socially...in every way possible. It's important to finish high school and have advanced studies [college degree]. Economically you can live better...socially you can relate with different types of people.

Emily was the only parent who commented on the social benefits of obtaining a college degree.

The idea that attending college enables individuals to relate with individuals from different backgrounds may be associated with the fact that she is the only participant with more than one child enrolled in college. Both of her daughters, a junior and a freshman, are enrolled at UC campuses. It is possible that discussions about diversity have taken place between Emily and her daughters. Thus, allowing her to understand that a college degree also confers benefits beyond the tangible direct benefits for the individual.

Other participants, like Rogelio described the benefits of a college education this way:

A college education is important to succeed in life. I want my kids to distinguish themselves among the family by having a degree...they will have benefits like a good salary...and be able to travel wherever they want. A person who doesn't have an education doesn't have a good salary and can't do that [travel].

Rogelio also states that a college education is important for success in life because it bestows advantages for the individual such as having the financial means to travel, a personal luxury. He also mentions that a college degree will enable his children to distinguish themselves among the family because they will be the first within their immediate and extended family to hold a

bachelor's degree. This is important to him because graduating from college is a great accomplishment, not an easy feat.

Yolanda, a single mother with an A.A. degree, states that a college education will make her daughter more independent,

I always tell her [daughter] that a college education opens up so many doors...job wise...that's what's important to me. I want her to be able to take care of herself, you know...and not depend on anything or anybody else...it's important.

Yolanda describes the power of college degree in making an individual more marketable to a wider range of lucrative career options. She believes that a four-year bachelor's degree will qualify her daughter for higher paying entry and upper level career options that will in turn make her financially independent, an important trait for a single mother raising a child on her own.

Overall, the responses support research findings that show that Latino/a parents strongly value education by emphasizing finishing high school and receiving a college education (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2004). The question reveals that parents associate a college degree with the personal and financial benefits an individual receives from obtaining a college degree (Vernez et al., 1999).

Preparation for College

Parental involvement during the college preparation process takes on many forms. Some parents directly participate in the process by providing hands on tangible academic support such as assisting with homework, attending parent teacher conferences, helping students select a major, and/or researching universities academic reputation. Others participate with indirect approaches such as aspirational support intended to encourage and motivate and sharing family stories as a form of empowerment to pursue a college education.

A. Expectation to Go to College

Students develop attitudes and dispositions to attend college from explicit and implicit messages they receive from their parents (McDonough, 1997). The type of messages students are exposed to can either cultivate or stifle their aspirations to pursue a college education. The majority (25 of 26) of families who participated in this study expect their children to go to college. However, one parent from Group #1, Tanya stated that she would like her daughter to attend but she cannot force her.

Nineteen families (Group #1= 9 and Group #2= 10) reported not providing any advice regarding where to apply. Esmeralda explains it in this manner:

When I talk with her, I tell her, look...I'm not going to be the one that's going to go [to college]. You are the one that is going, you are the one that's going to study...it's up to you to choose where you want to go.

For Esmeralda, the decision as to where to go should be made by her daughter because it directly impacts her. Therefore, Esmeralda encourages her daughter to think about her options and make the most of her decision. Although Esmeralda does not provide direct advice as to where to apply, she demonstrates having a general understanding that her daughter needs to find a good college fit.

Francisca said the following:

I don't [provide advice on where to apply]...I really can't. I try to look into what's better you know...statistics, but other than that I leave it up to them. I really can't tell them. We just try to give them the information and raise them the best we can, but the decisions we mostly leave up to them.

Francisca demonstrates having some understanding of campus characteristics that are important to selecting colleges since she is able to research campus statistics about colleges/universities. Although she compiles the data, she does not use it to persuade or dissuade her children. Francisca's approach is to present the information to her children to assist them with the decision making process.

Both, Esmeralda and Francisca display general support for their children to attend college. They both show some understanding of shopping for "college fit." Their statements suggest knowledge of the varying important, intangible, and often unforeseen variables that must be considered beyond the college's name. They also encourage their children to capitalize on their decision.

Lorena gives the following guidance:

I give her advice. I tell her, I will support her wherever she wants to go as long as it's a good university where she feels good...because to be honest I don't know the universities, their practices or what they have.

Lorena demonstrates support for college enrollment and advises her daughter to choose a "good university" where she "feels good." Although not stated explicitly, Lorena is describing the importance of having a sense of belonging with the college/university campus, which aids with retention and degree completion.

Karla explains her inability to assist her son this way:

We have not been able to help him because we wouldn't know what types of universities to recommend...we are ignorant in that regard, we don't know anything about that.

Karla states that she is unable to advise her son as to where he should attend because she does not have the necessary knowledge to make an informed recommendation. Awareness of her

limitations and the perception that her son is better informed might be reason why she concedes the decision making to her son.

Jackie explained her reasoning for allowing her daughter to choose for herself this way:

I leave the decision up to her. She started knowing more then us [parents] when she started middle school...we [parents] didn't even finish elementary school. Sometimes we ask her for advice about other things...she knows more than us.

According to Jackie, her daughter has surpassed her parents' educational levels. As a result, her daughter is better equipped to make a decision about where to go to college. Jackie explains that her daughter is capable of making that decision since her parents rely on her for advise on other family matters.

The majority of families provide general support for their children's college aspirations. However, they were unable to make recommendations because they do not have the knowledge base about specific college characteristics. This finding is consistent with previous research (Post, 1990; Tornatzky et al., 2002) findings that parents' factual college knowledge is significantly low. As a result, parents do not feel equipped to provide advice or make recommendations. Nevertheless, families instinctively recognized the importance of student-college fit and encouraged their children to maximize their decision. Moreover, parents perceive the student to be the consumer of educational goods, therefore making them the best person responsible for making the decision.

Only a small group of families (7 of 26) described offering advice with regards to where to apply. All seven parents (Group #1= 4 and Group #2= 3) spoke about offering advice with regard to the college's location. Two of the seven parents spoke about advising their child to

attend community college to remain close to home. Claudia said the following about location and enrolling in a community college:

My son went all the way to Chico. I feel that's too far. I wouldn't want my daughter to also go far. I would like her to be closer to us. I at times advise her that it's good to go to a community college to complete her first two years so she can stay at home. For me that's better but she says that she wants to go directly to a university. We will support her in whatever [she chooses].

Claudia does not want to have two children live away from home while they attend college. Therefore, she encourages her daughter to attend community college so she can live at home. Yet despite her hesitation, Claudia ultimately supports her daughter's decision to attend a 4-year university and possibly move away from home. Claudia ultimately yields to her daughter's college plans, thus demonstrating support for her college aspirations.

Samantha shares similar advice with her daughter:

I would want her to go to a community college, but her dream is to go to England. She's set on going to England. I want her to remain here, in the state [California]. I would like to have her close to me. If she ever needs me I will be able to go see her...if she leaves I can't even leave the country [due to immigration status].

Although Samantha advises her daughter to attend community college, her recommendation may have less to do with the type of college she would like her daughter to attend and more with Samantha's immigration status since her main concern is about her inability to travel outside the country. Future studies should investigate the effect of parent's immigration status on students' college choice decisions. Both Claudia and Samantha's advise support the traditional finding that Latino/a parents want their children to attend community college so they stay at home or in close

proximity (Strom & Strom, 1995). However inconsistent with this finding is parents' receptiveness to their children going farther away if that is their final decision.

Unlike the two previous parents, Adriana does not advise her daughter to attend a community college. However, like Claudia she advises her daughter to attend college in California given her immigration status.

We [family] are very united. I tell her that I wouldn't want her to go far. I'm ok with Cal State Long Beach, UCLA or USC, but I tell her not to go far...like San Jose or to another state like New York [because dad and mom cannot travel due to immigration status].

Both Samantha and Adriana expressed concern about their inability to travel to see their children in case of an emergency if they went to college out of state or country. The accounts about restricting their children's college choices by location raises two interesting questions: Does parents' desire to have their children attend a college close to home related to parents' immigration status? Are parents more open to having their children choose out of state colleges or colleges outside their local area when they do not have travel restrictions due to their residency in the country? Unfortunately, this study did not include a question regarding parents' citizenship status in the participant questionnaire and cannot answer this question. Future studies can explore this phenomenon.

Adriana was the only participant that discussed negotiating college options with her daughter. She discussed the following conversation that occurred between her husband, daughter and herself earlier in the week:

This week, she [daughter] received a letter...she always gets them, but [this time it was] from Princeton. My husband says it's a good university but he said that if she wants to move over there that we [family] would go with her. He is willing to make the move so

she can achieve her dream of becoming a veterinarian...and so that she is not alone. I joke around about living in an RV [recreational vehicle].

Adriana's family dialogue exemplifies a strong statement of support to motivate and encourage their daughter to pursue her educational goals. However, it is noteworthy to highlight that Adriana's husband received a bachelor's degree in his home country. Although he does not practice his profession, because it is not acknowledged in the U.S., his unwavering support may be attributed to his educational level and/or understanding of prestige since he appears to have some knowledge that *Princeton es una buena universidad* (Princeton is a good university) Moreover, their discussion about moving to New Jersey with their daughter may be a direct solution to their inability to travel. By moving to the same state as their daughter, they deliberately circumvent travel restrictions to support their daughter's educational aspirations.

B. Academic Support

Academic achievement is a strong predictor of high school graduation and college preparedness. Families were asked to describe their role in helping their child prepare for college. Thirteen (13 of 26, Group #1= 8 and Group #2= 5) families reported providing two forms of direct support: assistance with homework and participation in parent teacher conferences and other school activities (McDonough, 1997). Lily, mother with an A.A. degree describes how she helps her son academically,

I'm always pushing him, making sure homework is done, making sure I am very aware of the classes that he takes, where he stands in each of his classes, so if he needs help I am the one to help him...as a parent being bilingual and going to school here also, I'm aware of some of the courses and information that he's given so, he has it easy at home because

I'm able to help him, not like other students that their parents don't know English like my parents and they weren't able to help me as much so...I think that helps a lot too...I push him, help him. If he has a question with material, he'll come to me, Mom, what does this mean? Or I can't understand that...can you explain it to me? I push him a lot to do an agenda, to prioritize his stuff also. I'm there. He can come to me with anything, pretty much.

Lily's education level and the fact that she was educated in the U.S. are important to her general knowledge and the type of support she is able to offer her son. Moreover, she is aware that her ability to speak English and her level of educational attainment gives her an advantage to help her child over Spanish speaking parents with lower educational attainment levels.

In contrast, Francisco, a father with a high school education, responded as follows:

[We don't] have a college degree [but] we don't let that limit us. Let's say uh, they [children] have a question. I tell them, you know, we have the Internet... I sort of dig in there too and try to answer whatever they're confused about...I'll look it up and I'll share it with them...I sort of always find myself looking at beginner sites and stuff like that. And then from there I sort of get an idea of what and where we're going so I...try to pinpoint his question or the answers to his questions.

Francisco is aware that not having a college education puts him at a disadvantage to help his children academically. However, not having a college degree does not deter him from finding answers to their questions. The Internet is a tool that enables him to research questions when he does not know the answer. He embraces technology now that Internet is more widely available to help his children complete homework assignments or answer general questions. His hands-on discovery based approach directly supports his children's' educational growth. This approach is

noteworthy because it challenges the idea that a formal education is the only measure a parent can offer direct support (McDonough, 1997) because this parent combines direct homework support with indirect aspirational support (Yosso, 2005).

Other parents spoke about participating in school related activities. Lorena, a single parent with a 10th grade education, responded as follows:

I have provided my support and been a volunteer at the schools. I have constantly been going to parent workshops so that they [children] can see that I also care about their well-being. I have been a volunteer since they [children] were in kinder. [I have been volunteering] for twelve years in the district. I have been in the parents PTA [Parent Teacher Association]. I have always been constant with them [because] if they see their parents motivated or that they are involved they say, oh my mother does care, you know. That's why I always, I invite parents to come to the [PTA] workshops because the information is good.

For Lorena, being active and directly involved in school is important because it transmits the notion that she values and supports her children's academic endeavors. Lorena's frequent and active participation in school related activities is inconsistent with research findings (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; McDonough, 1997) that Latino/a parents have low rates of participation in school activities. Lorena has participated in school related activities since her children started kindergarten, thus highlighting her enduring commitment. Moreover, her involvement suggests that Lorena's attempt to positively affect her children's educational success began long before her participation in the Bright Futures program.

C. Aspirational Support

Parents provide explicit messages about the importance of obtaining a college education. All 26 families provide aspirational support to their children via motivation and encouragement to pursue a college education. Elizabeth, a mother with a middle school education, explains motivating her son at an early age, “I always motivate him. When he was in kinder I would get books that are for kids in kinder and we would study together at home. We have always done that. My dream is for him to go to college.” Elizabeth’s describes engaging in educational activities with her son at an early age to motivate him to go to college and realize her dream. Active participation in her son’s education helps her transmit the hopes, dreams and aspirations she has for her son. More importantly, Elizabeth’s participation is consistent with research findings (Gandara, 1997) that parents of high academically achieving Latinos(as) engage in literacy activities with their children. Thus, sharing much of the cultural wealth of middle and upper classes, although acquired through non-formal or lower educational levels. Lorena, a mother with some high school education, said the following:

As her mother, I try to support and motivate her by telling her that education is the foundation for success in life. There are times in life when there will be very challenging barriers, but if you have purpose, goal in life, you will achieve it.

Lorena suggests that obtaining a college degree will be difficult, but attainable. For this reason, she motivates her daughter by stressing the importance of setting a strong educational foundation to succeed in life. Families transmit aspirations, expectations, motivation, and encouragement and engage in related behaviors to directly influence their children’s educational aspirations.

All families provide aspirational messages and motivation to help students realize their educational ambitions. However, the manner in which they transmit their message varies. Eleven

families (Group #1= 3 and Group #2= 8) report discussing college aspirations by communicating expectations (5 participants, Group #1= 2 and Group #2= 3), providing verbal support and encouragement (3 participants, Group #2= 3) or giving children messages attached to a specific type of higher education outcome (3 participants, Group #1= 1 and Group #2= 2). Andrea, a mother with some high school, explains how she communicates expectations to her daughter:

I always support her. I remind her about her homework. I tell her it's her responsibility to ask for help if she's doing badly...to always try to get the best grades. I'm more involved with my daughter. My son already finished high school and he didn't have a lot of motivation to go to a university. So now, I want my daughter to go to a university...to have a good job...I tell her that all the time because I feel that I failed with my son. I am more involved with her...because I want her to have the opportunity to get a scholarship.

Andrea believes that her son did not enroll in college because she was not an involved parent. Therefore, she adapted her parenting approach and became more involved with her daughter. Her ability to change her approach is the result of a learning curve. She feels the need to atone for “failing” as a parent by being more involved with her daughter, provide motivation, and verbally communicate the expectation to attend college to avoid making the same mistake. Andrea's involvement with the Bright Futures program is a direct result of her experience with her son.

Luz, a mother with a high school diploma, uses her older daughter as motivation to enroll in college. She describes encouraging her daughter in the following manner, “I tell her [daughter], look at your sister's example. She's at UC Berkeley and you can also [go]. Your sister was able to do it and so can you. But you have to try your best.” Luz's conversations with her daughter emphasize the notion that college is within reach. The older sibling has provided the impetus for a college education since she has paved the way for other siblings to follow. Luz

uses her older daughter as a role model as well as motivation to do well in school and follow the same path.

Luis, a father with a GED, describes giving his children messages attached to a specific type of higher education outcome:

As a father, I wish the best for my kids I would want them to go to Harvard. I know it is pricy and difficult to get in...I guess as long as they go to a CSU, its ok. I want them to go to a university...it doesn't have to be a UC.

Luis wants the best for his son and equates Harvard with a good college education. He understands that Harvard is a difficult university in which to gain admission into and is aware of costs. He expresses the expectation that his children attend a 4-year college. However, the type of 4-year college his son attends is not important. Luis' response suggests understanding of the value of bachelor's degree since he does not want his children to enroll at a community college to obtain an associate degree or complete general education courses to transfer. More importantly, his response suggests that he distinguishes among universities by the type of degree awarded and not by institution type since he does not distinguish between four-year colleges because they award bachelor's degrees.

Martina, a single parent with a middle school education, explained encouraging her son to attend a private university:

Right now, my son does not know where he wants to go to college. I tell him that he first has to try harder because sometimes you [son] have high grades then they drop. Do you think you will get accepted with those grades? You have to try harder to have good grades. I always tell him that I would like for him to go to a private college. I have always...had that idea, to have them [children] go to a private university.

Martina stresses the importance of good grades in gaining admission into college and encourages her son to get the highest grades possible. It is not clear whether Martina understands the relationship between academic achievement and admission into prestigious private colleges/universities since she was not able to elaborate on why she wants her children to go to a private college. When asked why she prefers a private university, her response was “because they’re better” and was not able to elaborate on characteristics that make a private university better. Her response suggests that she may be unaware about the educational quality, institutional characteristics and/or student outcomes of private colleges. Yet despite her unfamiliarity, the intent of her message is to motivate and direct her son to attend a private college.

Six parents specifically spoke about using incentives as a way to motivate children to do well in school. Erica, a mother with a high school diploma and family income below \$19,999, said the following:

You [son] need to try your best in your studies. If you really want to go to college, it has to come from you. I see that he’s very enthusiastic about video games. So we buy him his games and tell him, son you need to have [self] determination. Don’t say I’m going to study and get an A because they [mom and sisters] are going to buy me a game...do it for you. As long as you want to go to college, I’m going to support you.

Erica describes encouraging and supporting her son to do well in school by providing rewards, external motivators. Yet, she also describes encouraging him to develop internal motivation to want that for himself. Erica’s message is important because it recognizes her son’s academic accomplishments and transmits support for college. Moreover, given that the family’s annual income is extremely low, Erica and her daughters are able to transmit the value ascribed to a college degree.

Esperanza, mother with a middle school education and family income below \$59,999, explained it this way:

We encourage them to continue [studying] and we expect good grades from them in their report card. If they don't [have good grades] there will be no vacations in the summer... There will be no outings if we see that they have low grades... [vacations] are a big motivation for them. They know that if they continue moving forward and their grades go up, they will get a reward from us [parents].

Like Erica, Esperanza also transmits educational aspirations via parental encouragement and incentives as motivation in support for educational outcomes. Esperanza's response suggests that she has used this technique with her children in the past and it has been effective.

It is important to note that five of the six families who use incentives reported annual household incomes below \$19,999. This is an unexpected finding given their income levels. Nevertheless, incentives may help families transmit the value and importance of a college education by showing their children that the family is foregoing other household expenses to incentivize academic achievement.

Jose, a father with an elementary school education, said the following about the messages he gives his son:

We want the best for him and for him to reach that goal to be able to go to college...for his own good. Sometimes when I take him to school, I tell him...try your best...so that he does not go without a reminder about the importance of school...When he was in middle school he first told us he wants to go to USC. I told him, well if you like that one, you have to try your best so you can go there because not everyone gets to go there...if you work and set your mind to it, you can do it.

Jose describes his son's desire to attend USC since he was in middle school and fostering his son's aspiration by motivating him to do well in school and supporting him to achieve his goal. The families in the excerpts above show the manner in which they affect educational outcomes for their children by transmitting aspirational goals to attend college in various ways. The intent is to transmit messages that communicate that college attendance is expected and valued in the family. Parent's aspirations for their children extend to a college education. It is noteworthy that there were no gender differences in regards to levels of aspiration. Parents equally encouraged their sons and daughters to attend college.

D. Familial Support

Latino/a families transmit high educational aspirations and the importance of a college degree via *platicas* (conversations/talks that empower and impart wisdom and values). Seventeen participants (Group #1= 7 and Group #2= 10) reported sharing economic, social, and occupational struggles as stories of empowerment to pursue a college education. Julian, a father who works in construction, explains it this way:

I motivate him [to go to college] by giving him examples of what he sees in me...my other sons and other friends...[we] work like dogs...doing manual labor and not with our heads. It's better to work with your brain than manually because physical work is exhausting. A young person does not feel it [physical pain]...but in the long run, it's better to work with your brain.

This parent uses the expression *trabajar como burros* (work like dogs) as powerful imagery to motivate his son to go to college. Julian describes that people without a college degree have to work really hard or in harsh conditions to earn a living. In contrast, people with a college degree

do not have to put their bodies through physical pain because they “work with [the] brain” in office positions. Julian’s vivid description is intended to contrast working conditions to highlight the benefits of a college degree, which extend the financial benefits and also include improved working conditions (Vernez et al., 1999). By sharing occupational struggles, Julian aims to encourage and motivate his son to obtain a college degree.

Yolanda, mother with an A.A. degree, also uses her occupational struggles to encourage her daughter to go to college:

I tell her that I want that degree. It’s not mine but it’s for her good. It will just open doors everywhere you go...work wise. I tell her that I don’t want her to work at McDonalds or put groceries in a bag. I’m struggling myself [with an A.A.]...I don’t want her to go through that.

Yolanda describes that a college education provides better job opportunities. Yolanda stresses the importance of obtaining a bachelor’s degree because she recognizes that an A.A. degree is not sufficient to support a family since she is struggling herself. Like Julian, her comments demonstrate dissatisfaction with her working conditions. These stories project parents’ aspirations onto their children in hopes that they will motivate them to pursue a college degree that will enable them to attain jobs with better pay and working conditions. Moreover, their comments emphasize the personal financial benefits of a college degree (Vernez et al., 1999).

Other participants described different types of personal struggles. Jackie, a mother with less than an elementary school education, stated that she tells her children, “that they have to study and get a career...that they need to be better examples for their children since we [parents] are not good examples to follow because we [parents] didn’t go to school.” Jackie’s statement shows that she does not consider herself a role model for her children to emulate and aspire to be

because she and her husband received less than an elementary school education. At the same time, her statement indicates that a college degree also confers benefits to families, in particular to children, since it has the potential to influence future generations.

Peke, the daughter who accompanied her mother to the interview, offered an example of a personal struggle to encourage her sister to go to college. She states:

To me, going to college or university has always been a big thing...I'm going to community college so I want her [my sister] to do something higher and be better than me. I'm undocumented and I try to encourage her as much as I can. I tell her to take advantage of the [financial] opportunities she's given as a citizen to continue with school and get a college education. I try to encourage her as much as I can. I tell her it's...the best for her, for her future.

Rogelio also shared a similar sentiment:

I only have an elementary school education...my desire was to keep studying, but due to a lack of finances I was not able to [continue with my studies]. I'm from Guatemala and it's poor there...we make her see that she needs to take advantage since she is from here [U.S]. The government gives many opportunities here.

Both of these participants spoke about their personal desire to continue their education but not having the opportunity due to citizenship status and finances. Their advice suggests that they believe there are fewer barriers to overcome because resources are available to finance a college education; students just have to seize the opportunity. Moreover, their statements also indicate understanding of resources, federal and state grants, to finance a college education.

Seven participants (Group #1= 3 and Group #2= 4) described discouraging their children from having boyfriends (four of seven) and girlfriends (three of seven). Ingrid, mother with a middle school education, described giving her daughter the following advice:

I give her advice about not forming a family young. I tell her, look at my example; I was a single mom with two sons before I met your father...I wish I could go back to school, but your dad doesn't let me. So I tell her, look at me...use me as an example. Study and prepare yourself...there is time for everything...this is not the way you want to live.

Ingrid's message is compelling. She describes wanting to continue her education but being unable to return to school because her husband does not allow her. She hopes that her situation will encourage her daughter to prepare herself, by earning a college degree, so she will not fall into the same situation one day. Moreover, for Ingrid a bachelor's degree is symbol of independence since it provides freedom and makes one self-sufficient.

Lily also shares similar advice with her son:

I always use myself as an example. I was a teen mom. I did finish my college...I got my A.A...but it's a lot harder when you have kids and go to school. So, I tell him to take care of his priorities before having a big responsibility like that...take care of your school so you can be set. I talk to him constantly about that.

Lily shares her hardships as a non-traditional student, raising children while enrolled in college, to communicate the importance of prioritizing college. Lily emphasizes her personal experience to discourage her son from following her same footsteps. Additionally, she also encourages her son to obtain a bachelor's degree because she wants him to surpass her educational attainment.

Overall, it is important to note that messages about waiting to have a boyfriend/girlfriend were not gender specific. Four parents shared this type of message with their daughters and three

parents shared this type of message with their sons. Once again, messages about postponing having a boyfriend/girlfriend for academia indicate strong support of educational aspirations. Additionally, parents' personal struggles are used to empower and encourage their children to pursue a college degree, stay motivated and continue to persist.

College Choice Decisions

A. College Choices

Discussions centered on college are important because parental involvement has a direct positive impact in students' decision to enroll in 4-year institutions of higher education (Perna & Titus, 2005). Eighteen families (Group #1=10 and Group #2=8) described discussing college choices with their children. Six of the ten colleges mentioned are located in Southern California. The colleges include: UC Irvine, UC Los Angeles, UC Santa Barbara, CSU Long Beach, CSU Northridge and the University of Southern California (USC). The other four colleges mentioned outside of Southern California include UC Berkeley, Stanford, Princeton and a college in England. The data indicates that approximately 70 percent of the families in the study have spoken with their child about their college plans. This finding is important because the likelihood of enrolling in an institution of postsecondary education depends on parental involvement (Perna & Titus, 2005). Conversations centered on college choices may thus increase the probability of enrolling in college.

An analysis of students' grade point averages would have been useful to determine student fit, whether students want to attend a college that is considered a reach, a match, or an "undermatch." However, student academic data was not collected. Future research should gather students' academic information and interview the student and parent as a family unit.

Nevertheless, the results raise important questions: Why are students restricting their range of institutions to mostly state schools? Why are students choosing colleges close to home? Unfortunately, students were not interviewed with their parent to answer this question.

B. Familiarity with the Higher Education Structure

The higher education system provides broad access to varied institutions, which differ in size, type of administrative control (whether public or private), selectivity, prestige and focus. Knowledge of the varying characteristics helps parents provide advice to their children when choosing colleges. Families described their understanding of higher education structure in the following ways: eleven participants (Group #1= 4 and Group #2= 7) described having some familiarity with admissions requirements between different types of institutions, and/or competitiveness (2 of 11) and/or cost (2 of 11). Lily, mother who participated in seven workshops, described her familiarity with admissions requirements:

I'm familiar with A-G, tests [SAT & ACT] and extracurricular activities. I know they can get a bachelor's, master's and a doctorate [degree] if they want to at a CSU or UC campus.

Lily was the only parent who commented about the way in which one degree leads to another. Lily's knowledge may be attributed to the fact that she was educated in the U.S. and obtained an associate's degree. Thus, she has knowledge of the education structure via her participation in higher education.

Adriana, mother who participated in seven workshops, shared having knowledge about the following:

The truth is that I've learned about all the different types of colleges here [Bright Futures]. I was not informed about anything before [participating in the program]. I like this program because I have become aware of all the possibilities available to them. Now I know about GPA, exam requirements and UC's, Cal States and private schools.

Adriana points out that she did not have prior knowledge about admissions requirements before participating in the Bright Futures program. Adriana attributes her knowledge as a direct outcome of her participation in parent workshops. Her high participation rate may explain her ability to understand admission requirements to public state universities since she points out that she did not have any prior knowledge.

Claudia, mother who participated in eight workshops, described her understanding of grade point average requirements for admission into UC's and CSU's:

I sort of know the differences. The UC only accepts the ones [students] that have a 3.0 GPA. The Cal State accepts students with a lower GPA. But it can't be below a 2.0 because they don't accept anyone cause the grades are too low.

Although she has participated in eight workshops, the maximum number of workshops, Claudia demonstrates some level of uncertainty in her response. Yet, Claudia's response indicates that she understands that UC campuses have higher admissions requirements than CSU campuses; therefore they rank higher in the education structure.

Yolanda, mother who participated in one workshop, explained her understanding in regards to cost:

I know the UC's are more expensive than the Cal States...I went to [a community college] for my first two years of college for the reason that it's cheaper and then I transferred to CSULB.

Institutional costs determined Yolanda's personal educational trajectory. She enrolled in community college because it was a more affordable option for her. Her experience may be the reason why she focuses on costs to differentiate among institutions of higher education. Moreover, her low participation rate in the parent workshops may explain her inability to provide additional information about the higher education structure in addition to what she learned through personal experience.

In contrast to the families with some knowledge of admissions requirements, sixteen families (Group #1= 9 and Group #2= 7) indicated that they are not familiar with the higher education structure. Lorena, mother who participated in five workshops, described her unfamiliarity in the following way, "I only know UCLA and [Cal State] Dominguez Hills...only the ones that are near me. I don't know about the others that are further away." Lorena's unfamiliarity is noteworthy because she is an outlier. Her participation rate is higher than the average family, yet she is not familiar. Additional research on the types of workshops she attended would have been useful to understand the reason(s) for her unfamiliarity. Emily, mother who has only participated in one workshop, expressed her unfamiliarity similarly, "the only one [college] I know is where my daughters are [UCI]." Both of these examples illustrate familiarity is limited to nearby colleges or colleges where someone they know has attended. It further illustrates the need to introduce options beyond their local area.

Other parents spoke about being unfamiliar because no one in the family has attended college. Erica, parent who has only participated in two workshops, explained it this way:

I'm not familiar right now because no one has made it to college. My older daughters only finished the 12th grade and that's it. They didn't continue. My son will be the first to attend and make it all the way.

Because Erica did not attend college, she does not have personal experiences to draw upon to assist her son. Erica is aware of her limitation and further states that she cannot use the experiences of older children since none of her children have attended college. Additionally, it indicates that increased participation in parent workshops is necessary to reinforce information since participation in two workshops was insufficient to bring Erica up to speed.

Differences in responses between families from the low and high engagement groups were evident in their knowledge about admissions requirements. More families in the high engagement group (7 of 11) described having knowledge of admissions requirements, including GPA and college entrance exam requirements. This may be attributed to the fact that they have higher participation rates in the Bright Futures parent workshops. Thus, reinforcing their knowledge about admissions requirements. These results are consistent with findings (Auerbach, 2004; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2009; Fann, Jarsky, McDonough, 2009) that parent involvement programs that transmit essential college information or “college knowledge” promotes college preparation. Whereas families in the low engagement group described being unfamiliar with the higher education structure and admissions requirements given the fact that they have not learned about differences from the experiences of an older child and are not highly involved in the Bright Futures parent workshops.

C. Most Important Factor in Choosing a College

College considerations vary within individuals. Families reported the following as the most important factors in choosing a college: prestige (8 of 26, Group #1= 6 and Group #2= 2), cost (7 of 26, Group #1= 2 and Group #2= 5), major (5 of 26, (Group #1= 1 and Group #2= 4)

and, proximity to home (3 of 26, Group #1= 2 and Group #2= 1). Art, a father with some college education, said the following about prestige:

The best school will give him the best job but not always does the best school give you the best education. But the name I think is what employers always go for...UCLA, USC, and Notre Dame...all these big schools...I think that's what is really going to play out. If you have two people going [applying] to the same job the best school...let's say UC or Cal State...the UC will always win over.

Art's comment is unique in that he thinks that a university's reputation may boost an individual's chances of obtaining a job. However, he does not believe in the assumption, correct or incorrect, that prestigious universities provide a better education than less prestigious colleges. Despite his statement, he understands that a university's prestige may provide an upper hand advantage when being considered for employment.

Parents like Claudia said major and cost are the most important factors in selecting a college:

For me...it's important that they have the major that my daughter wants. I would also look where they will help me more with financial aid because I don't have enough to pay for all the expenses.

For Claudia, the college major her daughter chooses is more important than the college/university's prestige. This is because she believes that selecting a major that reflects her daughter's interests will give her daughter a better chance of succeeding and may also positively impact her satisfaction with the college/university in the short term and her overall career satisfaction in the long term. Of equal importance, is the university's financial aid award because Claudia does not think she can afford to send her daughter to college on her own.

Lily said the following about cost and fit, “for me it’s important that he goes where he’s going to be comfortable. Where he’s going to like it that way he’s able to focus on school as well.” Peke also thinks fit is the most important factor. She said, I think the most important thing is...feeling comfortable with it [the college]. Stepping in there and feeling you belong in that school...like that...you’ll be more comfortable and more able to start a new chapter of your life. Both Lily and Peke attended community college. The first obtained an A.A. degree, while the second participant is currently enrolled in community college. Their student experiences may enable them to have a different perspective about factors that are important in choosing a college since they have first-hand experience. Lily and Peke’s responses suggest understanding of social “college fit”, being comfortable in the university environment in and out of the classroom. However, it is unclear whether academic and financial “fit” are also part their definition.

Eight families reported that major and/or proximity are the most important factors in choosing a college. Yolanda said the following about major being the most important factor, “she [daughter] wants to study to be a chemical engineer. I think she should look into...if it’s a good program...if colleges offer the program [major] she needs.” Yolanda’s response suggests she is familiar with university major offerings, departmental prestige and the importance of academic fit. Others, like Maria and Marisa, think proximity is more important than any other factor. This finding is consistent with findings (Strom & Strom, 1995) that Latino/a parents prefer their children to stay close to home. Maria said, “I want her [daughter] to stay close. Proximity is important in choosing a college. I think UC Santa Barbara is too far.” Marisa shared a similar thought, “It’s important that it [college] is close. I want her to stay close and not go far away.” Both Maria and Marisa stressed the importance of attending a college that is a short distance from home but did not elaborate why when asked.

Six participants (Group #1= 5 and Group #2= 1) did not know how to answer the question. Samantha, mother who participated in two workshops, said the following about not knowing what is most important, “I don’t know because I think that...it depends on them [the student].” Samantha’s response suggests that her inability to answer this question stems from the fact that she has not given any thought to this particular matter. Samantha thinks that the student is the most suitable person to determine which institutional characteristics are important, not the parent, because they are directly affected by the choice. Secondly, it is unclear whether Samantha has participated in workshops about the higher education structure and ways parents can support their children as they navigate the college choice process.

Vanessa, mother who has not participated in any workshops, said the following:

I don’t know what to tell you. I don’t have a lot of information...I don’t know what one [college] has and what others have. I’m just learning. I’m trying to get involved in parent workshops and inform myself more about what the differences in universities are.

Vanessa response suggests that she is aware of her knowledge deficits and recognizes the need to participate in parent workshops to learn about university types and differences.

Overall, participants’ responses elicited various responses they consider the most important in choosing a college. The top four responses to this question are: the colleges’ prestige because it affects job prospects, student college fit as it relates to social characteristics, major and proximity to home. The data shows that factors vary and depend largely on personal preferences and needs. It is noteworthy to highlight group differences between the low and high participation groups. Families who were unable to answer what they think is the most important factor in choosing a college had the lowest participation rates in the Bright Futures parent workshops. Thus, suggesting that higher participation counters knowledge deficits.

D. Importance of the University's Prestige

The value placed on a degree from a prestigious university varies among families. Twelve participants (Group #1= 5 and Group #2= 7) stated that it is important that their child is accepted into the very best most prestigious college/university. While an additional eleven (Group #1= 6 and Group #2= 5) said it was not important. Comments by families who think prestige is important are discussed first. Ingrid, a mother with a middle school education, said the following:

Yes, of course it is important that she [daughter] gets accepted to a prestigious university. That would be an accomplishment for her and make us proud. I don't want her to end up at Everest College. I don't know if you are aware of everything that happened there imagine all the poor students who went there...how are they going to end up? They invested time and money in all that education and it will be worth nothing. I worry about that.

For Ingrid, a university's prestige is important because it confers recognition to the student and the degree is of greater worth. Ingrid stresses that she does not want her daughter to waste time and resources. She references the abrupt campus closures at Everest College campuses, owned by Corinthian, with little to no explanation for students to express her concern about attending less prestigious colleges. Ingrid uses the unfortunate situation at Everest College to point out that a situation like this is unlikely to occur at a prestigious university. The value of the degree from a prestigious university does not depreciate.

Families also discussed the importance of a college's prestige for future job prospects. Julian, a father with a middle school education, said the following:

Prestige is important because the more prestigious the university is, the more prestigious my son is too. He will get a better job the better the university is. If no one knows the university no one will give him a job.

Art, father with some college education, expressed his opinion in a similar way:

It's very important [that he gets accepted into a prestigious college] because it's going to impact wherever he wants to work and who will hire him in the long run. I work for [a big snack food corporation]...they hire anybody from a Cal State or community college...but if you really want to climb that [corporate] ladder you have to come from big prestigious universities. My bigger bosses come from prestigious universities. I think that is what's going to determine [job] outcomes.

Julian and Art's responses indicate that they associate attendance at a top-tier prestigious university with advantages in the job market and their children's success in life. Art has personally witnessed the benefits bestowed to individuals with degrees from prestigious universities. Therefore, he believes that a college degree, regardless of major, is sufficient to give individuals an advantage in the job market.

In contrast, eleven participants (Group #1= 6 and Group #2= 5) stated that an individual's merit is more important than the college's prestige. Rogelio expressed understanding the idea of prestige but does not think it is important:

I know that schools with class [prestige] are supposed to be better...that's where the best teachers are and they are more expensive...I don't think I have enough [money] to pay for those kinds of studies. Students end up going to other colleges because they see the price difference...some can't pay for a prestigious university and go to ones that are less expensive. I think that the only difference is the name. I don't think it [the university they

attend] will affect [their job prospects] because she has studied. She has gone through the university and has her diploma [degree] and has learned from her classes.

Rogelio's response suggests that a degree from a highly selective university is not a prerequisite for a successful career. He believes that individual abilities and achievements are more important factors that help an individual get the job. This statement is noteworthy because it assumes that an individual can be successful regardless of where they go to college. Thus suggesting that success derives primarily from one's actions and abilities. Intelligent and competent students will obtain their degree and find a job in spite of where they go to college.

Like Rogelio, Lily also thinks prestige is not important:

Prestige is not important...if it's [the college] very prestigious and he is not going to pass his classes, then there's no real point to go to that college even though it's prestigious. If he doesn't feel comfortable to begin with, then it's not that important. I've known people that have graduated from a good college...USC and stuff like that and they're stuck working at a production manufacturing company because of their major.

Lily's statement is multidimensional. Prestige is not important if there is misalignment in the student-college fit because it results in failure to make degree progress. Lily's comments highlight that fact that she values degree completion over institutional status because the experiences of acquaintances suggest that a university's prestige does not guarantee occupational success or high earning potential. For Lily, one's major is more important for the types of job opportunities available.

Luis said the following about prestige not being important:

It would make me very proud if he gets accepted to a prestigious university but it's not that important...I have two older sons who attended UCSB and graduated two and three

years ago but they're unemployed. I think it doesn't matter...the individual is the university...it doesn't matter if you go to a prestigious university. Let's say that I went to a private university and my sons to a state university but they can get a job. It just depends on their achievements and merits.

Luis states that a university's prestige is not important. His sons have graduated from one of the top UC campuses in the state. Employment is important for Luis, particularly because it is used to encourage his children to pursue higher education. Yet, Luis' sons have not seen their return on investment. Their experiences have lead Luis to conclude that a university's prestige is not important if it does not result in employment.

It is important to note that six families, including Luis, used the phrase *la persona es la universidad* (the individual is the university) when discussing prestige. The origin of the phrase is unknown because Bright Futures program does not use it. Nevertheless, its use suggests that participants place greater emphasis on individual student achievements rather than a university's prestige or recognition. This may be because the end goal for parents is for their child to obtain a good job, an individual and personal task. Parents' may hold the belief that the outcomes of our actions are contingent upon what we do (internal control orientation) not events outside our personal control (external locus of control) (Zimbardo, 1985).

Approximately half (12 of 26) of families believe that a college's prestige increases job prospects. However, an approximate equal number of families (11 of 26) believe that prestige is not important. Overall, the responses show some level of sophistication in understanding, where prestige is equated with better jobs. However, responses also indicate misunderstanding around institutional status/outcomes and student/institution fit. In general, families did not speak about university rankings, retention or graduation rates, employment rates etc. The results indicate that

families do not truly understand the concept. Therefore workshops on this topic should be incorporated into parent workshops.

E. Importance of the Type of College Child Attends

As discussed earlier, Latino/a families in this study have high educational aspirations for their children. Therefore, it was necessary to investigate whether the type of college their child attends is important to families. The majority of families (19 of 26, Group #1= 8 and Group #2= 11) stated that they want their child to attend a 4-year university. While three said the type of college/university is not important as long as they go to college (Group #1= 3). Lorena said the following about wanting her daughter to enroll in a 4-year college:

The most important thing is that she goes to a university. I don't want her to be the person that only completes high school and then goes to work at a hamburger restaurant or cleaning a restaurant or putting clean sheets in beds at a hotel. I want her to say, I studied at this university and I graduated and I'm a nurse. I want her to be someone in life. I don't want her killing herself for minimum wage because there's a lot of help from the government with FAFSA...For me, going to a 4-year is the best thing she can do. The only thing that I can leave behind for my children is an education.

Lorena specifically states that she wants her daughter to attend a 4-year university because a bachelor's degree is necessary to launch a career in the medical field. For Lorena, an education from a 4-year university may liberate her daughter from having to work blue-collar jobs that pay minimum wage. For this reason, Lorena remarks that an education as the best legacy she can bestow to her children given its potential to break poverty cycles. Although Lorena states that she want her daughter to attend a 4-year university, she does not make a distinction between the different types of 4-year universities.

Adriana also prefers that her daughter enroll in a 4-year university:

I think it is best for her [daughter] to go straight to a university. I think that would be best for her instead of going to a community college...I think that is a way of wasting time if she goes to community college. I think it's better to go straight to the university instead of transferring.

Adriana's statement suggests that she thinks 4-year universities are a better launching point to earn a college degree. Adriana did not elaborate why she thinks community college is a waste of time. One possible explanation is that she is aware of the challenges community college students face to complete their general education courses and the longer than recommended time it takes students to transfer. Like Lorena, she also does not distinguish between the different types of 4-year universities.

Sandra also prefers enrollment in a 4-year university:

I want for her [daughter] to go to a university not a community college. I don't think the community college is good enough for her to study there. If I see that she has no possibility of going to a university then I would settle for that [community college].

Sandra's vocabulary suggests some awareness of the higher education structure since universities have a higher place in her classification structure than community colleges. More importantly, she describes settling for a community college as a last resort, not a first option. Like the other families, she does not distinguish between the different types of 4-year universities.

Other families shared similar comments, Samantha said the following, "I want her to go to a university. I don't want her to go to a community college. I think universities provide more possibilities for them in terms of better jobs." Samantha's statement indicates some understanding of the value of an A.A and B.A. in terms of job opportunities. Lily shares a similar

statement, “I would rather have him go to a four-year college than a community college. Get it over with and not waste time taking classes that aren’t even transferable and get stuck an extra year or two in a community college before transferring to a four year.” Lily appears to have some understanding of the challenges community college students face in successfully transferring to a 4-year university within the recommended 2-years. It is unclear if her understanding comes from personal experience.

Families used the term *colegio* (college) when speaking about 2-year colleges and *universidad* (university) in reference to 4-year colleges. Families did not use the term *colegio* (college) as it is commonly used in English to describe any institution of higher education. In other words, families do not use the terms college and university interchangeably. This suggests that families differentiate between 2 and 4-year colleges via its terminology. As a result, this prevents them from disaggregating 4-year colleges by characteristics that further differentiate them from one another.

Only a small number of parents (3 of 26, Group #1= 3) said the type of college their child attends is not important. Yolanda explained her reasoning this way:

If she decides to go to junior college, I’ll be ok with that...I mean as long as she keeps [studying]. I know that I did it because it was cheaper that way. As long as she can get whatever she needs to transfer I would be fine with it.

Yolanda states that the type of college her daughter attends is not important. Yolanda began her educational trajectory at a 2-year college because it was a more affordable option. What is important to Yolanda is that her daughter receives an education that extends high school and paves the way to a 4-year university.

Similarly, Art said the following:

What's important to me is for him just to go to college. I would be ok if he goes to a community college. Maybe it will be a stepping-stone for him...to realize that is not where he's supposed to be. As long as he's educated and he goes somewhere I will be fine with it. But if he goes to a university of course I would love for him to just get that.

Like Yolanda, it is not important to Art where his son begins his undergraduate studies as long as he transfers and receives a bachelor's degree. It is noteworthy to highlight that both Yolanda and Art attended community college, which may be the reason why they are more open to the idea of attending a community college after high school.

Esmeralda, a mother with a ninth grade education, says the college does not matter as long as it is not a technical school. She shared her daughter's interaction with a technical school:

My oldest daughter wanted to go to UEI [United Education Institute], but we [parents] didn't like it. They [UEI] kept insisting...calling and calling to check if she was going to go there. They [UEI] had her clothes, shoes, and the classes she was going to take. The school [UEI] had everything ready for her but we didn't sign any of the papers they wanted us to sign. They tried to pull a fast one on us because they didn't explain the paperwork...they just wanted us to sign a loan. He [husband] said talk to her [daughter] and tell her she's not going there...tell her to go to a college where she doesn't have to pay that much...she can go to a community college...have her enroll there. We [parents] will support her somewhere else, but not here [UEI].

Esmeralda's experience with the aggressive recruitment practices of technical schools was influential in her decision to keep her children away from them. She and her husband were hesitant to sign paperwork because they did not understand it and felt pressured. After some

consideration, it was decided that community college is a better and more affordable option for her daughter to continue her educational aspirations.

For these three families, the type of college their child attends is not important as long as it is a continuation of their education beyond high school. However, all three indicated that a community college is only a stepping-stone since they would all like their children to transfer to a 4-year university. In other words, the starting place does not matter, what ultimately matters is that their children obtain a bachelor's degree.

F. Freshman Year Living Options

Parent and student discussions about their child's freshman year living options are important when creating college choice sets. Of the families that have discussed freshmen living options with their children, fourteen (Group #1= 7 and Group #2= 7) reported that their child wants to live in the dorms, while five families (Group #1= 3 and Group #2= 2) indicated that their child wants to live at home. Seven others (Group #1= 3 and Group #2= 4) indicated that they do not know or have not discussed this topic with their child. The data indicate that almost two-thirds of families have discussed freshmen living options with their children. This finding is important because conversations centered on college choices may increase students' likelihood of enrolling in college (Perna & Titus, 2005). In addition, the data also indicates that dialogue regarding college plans is taking place at home.

Families report concerns about having a child move away to college. For twelve families (Group #1= 5 and Group #2= 7), their biggest concern is about campus safety. Andrea, mother with some high school education, said the following about the effect of the media on her concerns:

There are a lot of things in the news. I don't know if they trick us or if it's the truth...but they show a lot of things and I don't want anything bad to happen to her but...you always have to take that risk. There's a certain level of risk in everything...I always say one who doesn't venture doesn't gain.

Andrea has routinely watched reports of campus violence on the news media. These negative reports have shaped Andrea's perception of campus safety. She considers living on campus a risk. Addressing her concerns in parent workshops may change the perception that a university campus is an unsafe place.

Others shared similar concerns. Martina stated, "I'm concerned about all the things I hear on TV...that people kill them and rape them and all that. That's what I'm worried about."

Martina also worries that her son will fall victim of a tragedy similar to the ones reported on the news. Lorena also stated, "Schools are not one hundred percent safe because there are always people that...will do something crazy...like the recent massacre that happened at UC Santa Barbara." Lorena mentions a specific violent event at a college campus to highlight that campuses are not safe. The event she describes is a shooting where three people were hurt near the UC Santa Barbara campus. Yet, she described the event as a "massacre" that occurred on campus. News reports are influential in shaping family's perceptions about campus safety.

Another parent, Claudia, shared a story about something that happened to a relative.

I tell my son the same things I say to my daughter...choose your friends wisely. I feel that there will be friends that will want to take them out to parties or take them drinking. I always tell them, if you are drinking something finish the drink; do not leave it because someone will slip something into your drink before you come back. I'm fearful of bad influences because they have an aunt that went partying with her friends and someone

slipped something in her drink. The next day she woke up in a hotel. She was raped.

That's the reason I always give this type of advice to my kids.

Since participants have not attended college themselves nor have an older child who has attended college, a mix of anecdotal media messages and third party accounts exacerbate their concerns about safety. Concerns about safety and female children leaving the home have been documented as cultural concerns specific to Latino/a parents in prior research (Auerbach et. al., 2004). However, it is important to note that none of the families expressed concerns about their female children going away to college. This may be attributed to the fact that the Bright Futures program takes students to live in college dorms and other locations throughout students' participation in the program.

G. Paying for College

Families finance a college education using a variety of resources. Understanding the ways low-income families plan to pay for college provides insight into their knowledge of resources available to them. Twenty-two families mentioned that they plan to use one or more of the following methods to pay for college such as financial aid scholarships (16 of 26, Group #1= 8 and Group #2= 8), loans (9 of 26, Group #1= 7 and Group #2= 2), and savings (7 of 26, Group #1= 5 and Group #2= 2). Yolanda said the following about financial aid and savings:

We're going for the whole financial aid thing. I'm going to start something like a savings...I should have started a fund for her [daughter] when she was younger but I didn't. My younger sister started a fund for her [daughter]... my sister has no children and sees her [daughter] like her child. My sister says that she [daughter] will be taken care of if I can't afford [to pay for] college...but I still want to apply for financial

aid...I'm also willing to get a loan so [daughter] can pursue her dream to become a chemical engineer.

Yolanda states that she plans on financing her daughter's education via savings and financial aid. The fact that Yolanda's sister is willing to financially contribute to her niece's education illustrates that support to attend college extends the family unit and includes extended family members. Yolanda uses the term financial aid but does not specify the type: grants, loans, scholarships and work-study. Her response also suggests that she might not consider loans to be part of financial aid.

Lily has prior experience financing her college education and plans to finance her son's education in a similar manner. She states, "We will probably qualify for financial aid and probably also pay out of pocket. Financial aid paid for my A.A...I assume it will do the same for him." Lily's experience reassures her that her son will be able to finance his college education in a similar manner. Like Yolanda, Lily also uses the term financial aid as a general umbrella to describe all types of financial aid since she did not specify if she is referring to grants, loans, scholarships or work-study.

Vanessa, a mother who has not participated in any of the Bright Futures parent workshops, said the following:

He [son] plans to apply for scholarships or look for help...help from the government ...and if he doesn't get that help...we will have to step in. We have savings for their education. I don't have a lot of information about loans. I'm actually going to a workshop on that soon. I have been to some [workshops] but they have not explained loans or any of that. They have talked about the help...financial aid...scholarships, but not about loans.

Although Vanessa has not participated in any of the Bright Futures parent workshops, she has some knowledge of ways to finance a college education via participation in another program. It is unclear whether Vanessa is referring to grants when mentioning help from the government. Like the other families, Vanessa uses financial aid as a general term for different forms of aid: grants both federal and state, loans, scholarships and work-study. However, overall responses indicate that families' use the term "financial aid" to mean government state and federal grants. Their responses suggest that they are aware of financial aid availability, but do not completely understand its complexities.

Families demonstrate support for their child's higher education aspirations by actively saving for college. Seven families (Group #1= 5 Group #2= 2) spoke about establishing savings accounts for their children. Art said the following:

I have a college fund for him. It's not in his name, but I have something for him. Maybe it won't be a whole lot. I also have my 401K and I'm buying stocks as well. So when the time comes, he and his sister will have something...I think his mom also has a saving account for him.

Art demonstrates his support for his children's college aspirations by establishing savings accounts. Art's strong support is exemplified in his willingness to use his retirement savings plan and stock profits to cover college costs. Moreover, his wife also shares financial support for college by establishing a second savings account for their son.

Maria said the following about financing her son's education:

Right now we are trying to save some...kind of money. We will try to get the money somehow to help him. I don't know about loans. There are some loans that have really high interest rates...my husband and I are looking for loans that don't have high interest

rates. I've been looking at loans from the bank when we receive promotional material at home.

Like Art, Maria is also supports her son's educational aspirations by actively saving for college costs. However she is hesitant about loans because of high interest rates. Maria's research for loan promotional material from banks suggests that she may be unfamiliar with federal student loans, which have low and fixed interest rates and shorter repayment periods. Workshops with a focus on federal student loans and repayment methods may help ease concerns about loans and guide their children to graduate from college with as little debt as possible. Focus in this area is important given that Latinos/as accumulate some of the highest student debt totals when compared to other underrepresented groups (Guzman, 2015).

In contrast, Luis appears to be familiar with federal student loans:

I think its ok for them to get loans because that's the way that they will learn to become responsible in life. I want them to say, I owe the government money...maybe that way they can try harder in their studies. They will learn responsibility and realize that nothing is free in life. The government will not always pay for their studies. There are people that will receive aid from the government and others will not.

Luis response about owing money to the government suggests that he is referencing federal student loans. He also appears to have some knowledge of eligibility requirements since he understands that not all students are able to receive aid.

One family expressed concerns about her inability to borrow federal loans. Adriana described her situation in the following manner:

Loans could be an option but I don't know if in our case we would be able to get a loan...because we don't have the necessary documents [parents are not U.S. citizens or

permanent residents] for us to take out a loan...no one will give it to us...that stops us [parents] from helping out financially.

Adriana's response shows her inability to take out a loan to help her daughter financially because she is not eligible to receive a federal PLUS loan for parents because she does not meet the citizenship or permanent residency eligibility requirement. Her predicament raises an important question: How can undocumented parents help offset the costs of a college education when federal PLUS loans for parents are not a viable option? Currently, a proposal to enact the Dream Loan Program for undocumented students is gaining support (Guzman, 2015). However, eligibility of undocumented parents are not part of the proposal. Future policies should explore this.

Other participants described their experiences financing the college education of an older child. Martina described her older daughter's college financing as follows:

I tell him that he needs to study so he can receive scholarships because we don't have money. My daughter doesn't have to pay anything. She received scholarships and money from the government [federal and state grants]. She even has a little money left over for her to spend. I think my son will do something like that too...I always tell them...I don't have money to give you guys. You guys have to try hard [in school] so you can qualify for a program [federal and state grants] or take out a loan that you can pay back because I can't help you financially.

Martina states that she does not have the financial means to pay for a college education. She encourages her son to get good grades because she understands that academic achievement can help students' secure financial awards to pay for educational expenses. As a result, Martina

understands that college is within reach despite her financial situation. Her daughter's experience is proof of the resources available to assist students.

Luz shared a similar example:

We didn't have to pay anything with my daughter because she got involved with programs...financial aid or something that gave her scholarships. She also has a loan that she has to pay back. We think she [younger daughter] will do the same.

Luz also has some understanding of ways low-income students are able to finance a college education. However, it is unclear whether Luz is using the word scholarship to include federal and state grants. On the surface, one may conclude that Luz does not understand the difference between a scholarship and a grant. Closer examination on the Spanish translation of each word may help clarify the issue. The translation of the word scholarship is *beca*. The word grant can be translated into *subvención* or *beca*, with the latter being the most commonly used to translate the word grant. In other words *beca* can be used when speaking about both grants and scholarships.

Nevertheless, these accounts show that low-income families who have an older child in college understand that in-state public institutions of higher education are within reach. Given their income, these families are eligible for federal and state grants, such as Pell and Cal Grants, which cover tuition and most general student supplies. This experience assures parents that their younger children will have the ability to finance their education with the assistance of federal and state grants, scholarships, and loans in the same manner in which an older sibling or the parent financed their college education. Moreover, 22 of 26 parents did not express having to fully fund a college education. This may be due to awareness about resources available to low-income families to cover the costs of a public in-state undergraduate tuition.

However, families (4 of 26, Group #1= 4) without this shared experience expressed greater uncertainty about their ability to finance their child's college education. Maricela said the following, "I really don't know [how to finance daughter's college education]. There are a lot of programs that help but I would need to investigate more to get help." Maricela knows that there are programs that help, however she does not mention any in particular. Karla explained it in a similar way, "I don't know [how to finance son's college education]. We have not talked about it yet. That is what is most difficult...imagine...we work for minimum wage. A university education is expensive. We cannot afford it." Karla's response suggests that she is not aware of resources available to low-income families since she comments that she would not be able to afford a college education with her salary. Lorena also expressed the same uncertainty, "I have no idea. We will see how we will deal with that." Similar to the other families, Lorena is not aware of resources to help finance a college education.

The findings support previous research (Tornatzky et al., 2002) that low-income parents lack basic college knowledge and information about financial aid. It is noteworthy to highlight that parents who expressed uncertainty about financing their child's college education had the lowest participation rates, ranging from zero to two, in the Bright Futures parent workshops. The contrasting responses suggest that participation in workshops may help raise awareness about financial resources available to low-income students.

The decision to concurrently enroll in an undergraduate program and work part time is often made by students and their parents. Nine families said they leave the decision up to their child (Group #1= 8 and Group #2= 1). While twelve families report that they do not expect their child to work while they are in college (Group #1= 3 and Group #2= 9). Andrea responded as follows:

We don't want her to work while she's in college. I want her to study so she can finish...I don't want her to like having extra money and not want to study. She'll be there [in college] for four or five years and we tell her that she needs to try her best even if we are a little bit limited with money. We want her to finish college because it will benefit her in the long run...she will live better.

Andrea's wants to delay the time her daughter enters the work force in order to focus on her studies. Her preference to delay entering the workforce until college graduation shows awareness of the individual benefits of a college degree, higher salary.

Samantha said the following, "I don't want her to work while she's in college. I would only want her to study. I will help financially as much as I can and support her...I only want her to study...just study." Sandra explained it this way, "What I want is for her to concentrate on her education. I prefer for her not to have to work. She can work until she is ready to start a career after she graduates. Both examples highlight families' decision to delay entry into the workforce until graduation. For these families, prolonging entry into the workforce is a way to ensure that the student focuses on his/her studies and does not have external distractions that may interfere with graduation.

Once again, there are differences in responses between families from the low and high engagement groups. More families (9 of 12) in the high engagement group report that they do not want their child to work while they are in college because jobs may interfere with their college goals and academic progress. This finding is consistent with research findings (Gandara, 1995) that parents show support for their children's education by protecting their time for study and foregoing their salary to assist the family financially. The Bright Futures program discusses

the advantages and disadvantages of participation in a work-study program. It is possible that discussions about the disadvantages influenced parent's views.

Only four participants (Group #1= 1 and Group #2= 3) stated wanting their child to work while in college. Yolanda said the following:

I would like for her to take advantage of the work-study program. I think it also helps her break out of her shell because she is shy. I was the same way when I was her age, but that experience working with people really helped me. I think that would help her too.

Yolanda wants her daughter participate in the work-study program to help her be more friendly and sociable, not to help the family financially.

Luz also expects her daughter to work while in college:

My daughter has a job on campus. I think this one [younger daughter] will do the same...that way they become responsible. Learn what it means to have responsibilities and a job. She needs to have an idea of what it means to wake up early, work extra time and see the benefits of a check.

Luz wants her daughter to hold a part time position while in college so she can follow her older sister's steps. Luz indicates that she wants her daughter to learn her life-long work skills like hard work and responsibility. Like Yolanda, Luz does not mention wanting her daughter to work to contribute to the family's finances.

Jackie said the following about working:

My daughter [that's in CSU Channel Islands] works and studies and that's the same thing that my [younger] daughter will do. They will both have to work and we will help by taking out loans too. We have a [parent] loan under our name and she has one under hers too.

Jackie also mentions that she wants her daughter to work and study because that is what her older daughter is currently doing. Her response suggests that her daughter's earnings are used to pay for educational expenses since she states that parents have taken out a loan to help.

For these families, the expectation to work while enrolled in college is associated with personal development and learning to be responsible and not with the expectation to help support the family (Gandara, 1995; Ortiz, 2011). Moreover, they expect their children to work while in school because that was something the parent did or older sibling is currently doing while enrolled in college. It also illustrates some direct experience and knowledge with the work-study process, another element of financial aid.

Involvement in the Bright Futures Program

The mission of college preparation programs is to assist underrepresented students, often low-income and potential first-generation students, in gaining access to institutions of higher education. These programs have recognized that students are not the only actors in the process of choosing and selecting colleges. Therefore, they have incorporated parent workshops to provide college information. This study investigated whether family involvement in the Bright Futures parent workshops has helped families develop a richer understanding of university preparation and/or their perception and practice of encouraging and working with their children about college going.

A. Perception of Involvement

Families' responses about their involvement in the program were compared with the actual number of workshops they attended. Their responses created four categories describing

their levels of participation: only participated in one workshop, not that involved, somewhat involved and very involved. Overall families' perceptions of their involvement in the program correspond with the number of workshops they have attended. However, four families overestimated their participation. They reported being very involved with the program although they only attended one or two workshops. Two families (of four who overestimated their participation) stated that in addition to participating in the workshops, they also take their children to program activities. Their responses suggest that they consider driving their children to and from program activities part of their involvement with the program. This is important because it suggests that parents have divergent definitions and perceptions of parental involvement. Future studies may investigate the manner in which parents define parental involvement since insight can help stakeholders acknowledge the different ways Latino/a families define participation in their child's education.

B. Greater Understanding of University Preparation and Types of Universities

Parents are a critical source of college information for their children across social groups (McDonough, 1997; Perna & Titus, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). However, most low-income and Latino/a parents lack crucial college knowledge (Post, 1990; Tornatzky et al., 2002). Some college access programs have developed informational parent workshops to help close gaps in college knowledge. The level of participation may have a direct effect on the extent to which parent workshops impact and influence participants' perceptions and understanding of factors that affect college going. For this reason, this study investigated this phenomenon. The results indicate that families who participated have developed a richer understanding of university

preparation (14 of 26) and types of universities (6 of 26). Art explained having a richer understanding this way:

I think it [workshops] helps a lot of the parents that sit with us on the workshops and they start to understand what's really going on. How it's not very simple but it's not very hard either. Once you have the resources available to you, and you have a greater understanding of admissions, it makes it much easier for us to plan it out.

Art states that participation in the parent workshops has helped him, and other parents, understand admissions requirements. This greater understanding helps them realize that preparing for admissions is manageable; they have the resources at their disposal to help them make concrete plans.

Lily shared her experience this way, "I have a better understanding of...more than anything about the A-G requirements. I wasn't aware of all those requirements from high school to attend the university. I also didn't know about testing [college entrance exams] and how scores affect them." Lily's response indicates that participation in workshops helped her understand the manner in which specific admissions requirements work together to determine eligibility since she was not aware of certain requirements before her participation in the parent workshops.

Claudia said the following about learning from the program:

The workshops have helped me understand the classes they need to take to go to college. I can distinguish universities because there's some that have higher grade requirements than others...The workshops give us [Claudia and her husband] more specific information about things we didn't know before. We didn't know anything about how they were going to get into the university...we have learned a lot in these classes.

Claudia comments that prior to participating in the workshops she did not have prior knowledge about admissions requirements to help her child prepare for freshman admissions. Claudia attributes their increased knowledge to their participation in the parent workshops.

Other participants spoke about having deeper understanding of types of universities. Jackie said the following, “I didn’t know about all the universities...the state colleges and the private ones. I didn’t know anything about that. For me they were all the same.” Jackie describes thinking that all universities were the same because she lacked the necessary knowledge to differentiate between the types of higher education institutions before participating in the parent workshops. Although she does not mention all the different types of colleges, her response suggests awareness since she mentions state colleges and private universities.

Rogelio shared a similar response, “I learned about the different colleges, on their location and all that...the program helped me develop a richer understanding...that’s important because now we can help them...we couldn’t do this before because we didn’t know any of this before.” Like the other parents, Rogelio’s response indicates that workshops helped him gain greater understanding about college options. Moreover, his response also suggests a change in perception about his ability to advice and helps his child since he states that he can provide assist now.

C. Increased Conversations about College

Conversations about college are important because they provide the opportunity, for parents and their children, to discuss expectations. Families reported that the workshops have helped them initiate conversations with their children about college (13 of 26). Julian describes speaking with his son after the parent workshops:

When I go home I give him examples of what happened in the workshop. I try to talk to him as soon as he gets home...before I forget...while the information is fresh...I also tell him that he needs to keep his grades up...I also ask him [son] questions about what he wants to be and where he wants to go.

Julian describes starting conversations with his son around topics discussed in the parent workshops. The fact that he uses the topics covered in the parent workshops to facilitate conversations with his son suggests that these conversations might not have taken place if he did not participate.

Francisco shared a similar example:

When we pick them [children] up we talk about something we picked up in the workshop and we sort of try to make it part of our lives. We include it in our lives so our involvement is not only here, but also at home. I'm glad we are learning at the same time and that it's helping them. I'm happy that we've learned about admission requirements. I have a broader perspective and know about more ways to support them [children].

Francisco also uses the topics discussed in the parent workshops to initiate conversations around college going at home that extend beyond the day of the workshop. Francisco also highlights the value of learning about admissions requirements at the same time as his children and having the tools to support them. Overall, responses suggest that workshops help parents initiate conversations with their children immediately after participation and sometimes extending into their everyday lives.

D. Increased Motivation

In addition to providing essential college knowledge, the parent workshops also serve as a motivating force to encourage their children to pursue a college degree. Families (7 of 26) in this study reported having increased motivation to encourage their children to attend college.

Samantha expressed her motivation in the following way:

The workshops have helped me a lot because I didn't know anything about preparing for college...absolutely nothing...nothing...nothing. I understand more. I'm more motivated...more motivated to think about her. I even started saving for them [children] and all that. We are definitely more involved with her and we motivate her more.

Samantha describes learning of ways to prepare for college and gaining increased motivation to be more involved and actively participate in the process by starting a college savings account.

Julian shared a similar example:

[The parent workshops] have helped me see all the universities that exist. I understand all the options...I know more of everything. Above all...it [workshops] have motivated me to help motivate my son to go to college...the program has opened my mind more...it has made me more conscious that we [parents] need to motivate them always. My vision in life is that all my children go to college...so we talk a lot about what they want to be in life and the only way they're going to make it happen is by having a college degree.

Julian describes that participation in the parent workshops has given him increased motivation to help his children go to college. As a result, he starts deliberate conversations about their academic goals and the importance of a college degree.

Ingrid also expressed having greater motivation to encourage her daughter:

I feel like the [program] staff motivates the students...and parents too...to prepare for college. I'm motivated to do the same at home and hopefully...something will catch on to motivate her more and more. I mean, not all of us have the same opportunities...the opportunities that she has right now. Right now we're all motivated.

Ingrid describes the manner in which motivation from program staff has a ripple effect on both students and parents. As a parent, she hopes to motivate her daughter at home to stress the same message in all aspects of life.

Chapter Summary

The findings outlined in this chapter are not always consistent with the literature on Latino/a parents and the types of direct or indirect support they provide their children. Consistent with the research literature, Latino/a families did not provide many of the different types of direct support to their children (McDonough, 1997). However inconsistent with the literature, was the finding that half of the families reported providing direct academic assistance in the form of homework completion and participation in parent/teacher conferences or other school activities. Also noteworthy is the finding that slightly more families (8 of 13) from the low engagement group (Group #1) provided direct academic support to their children. This might be attributed to the fact that seven of the eight families report some high school as their highest level of education. In contrast, families who reported providing academic support from the high engagement group (Group #2) include one parent who received an A.A. degree, one with some high school and three with less than a middle school education. The data indicates that although parents do not have a bachelor's degree, those with higher educational levels and those educated in the U.S. may be better prepared to assist their children academically.

The research findings also support previous research (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Yosso, 2005) findings that Latino/a parents are more likely to provide indirect support, through advice and verbal encouragement, to their children. All 26 families say they provide aspirational support with a small number of families (6 of 26) reporting using incentives to encourage their children to get good grades in school. Incentives may be the way families transmit the importance and value of educational outcomes since five of the six parents who provide incentives have an annual income below \$19,999. Moreover, 11 families (Group #1= 3 and Group #2= 8) provided verbal support and encouragement to go to college. While an additional 17 families (Group #1= 7 and Group #2= 10) shared personal and family stories of struggle to encourage their children to pursue higher education

A significant number of parents (16 of 26) stated that they plan to pay for college with the help of “financial aid” and scholarships. The term “financial aid” was used when speaking about federal and state grants. Participant responses indicate that they are generally aware of resources available to help low-income families finance a college education. Nevertheless, participant responses also indicate misunderstanding about the different forms of financial aid.

The finding that seven participants started college saving funds was inconsistent with the literature (McDonough, 1997). Although participants did not disclose total amounts of money saved, actively saving for college expenses demonstrates direct parental support in administrative related tasks (McDonough, 1997). Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that neither higher income nor greater participation in parent workshops explain the results because five of the seven families have annual incomes below \$29,999 and are from Group #1, low-engagement.

Although only one family spoke about her immigration status as a deterrent to borrow federal loans, it is important to discuss its impact on students. Parents’ undocumented status does

not prevent their children with U.S. citizenship or permanent residency from qualifying for federal and state grants, loans, and scholarships. However, undocumented parents' inability to borrow federal loans places a higher burden on the student to pay for expenses not covered by Pell and Cal Grants. This is noteworthy given that the University of California requires a \$9,500 student contribution from every student regardless of income (UC Counselors Conference, September 2015). The expected student contribution puts low-income students at a disadvantage since they may graduate with high student debt. Therefore, it is important to review financial aid policies to reduce out of pocket expenses for low-income students.

Clearly, older siblings have set a precedent regarding financing a college education. Parents expect their younger children to finance their education in the same manner as their older child, with scholarships, grants and work-study. Participation in parent workshops appears to have a positive impact on parent's knowledge about ways to finance a college education. Parents with higher participation rates demonstrated greater understanding of ways to finance a college education, while parents with less participation rates expressed more uncertainty. Parents who favor work-study think students will learn responsibility and develop better character. Moreover, consistent with the research literature (Ortiz, 2011), participants' responses indicate that parents do not pressure their children to work to help support the family. The expectation to work while in college is because someone in the family has participated in the federal work-study program.

Inconsistent with previous findings (Post, 1990; Tornatzky et al., 2002) families (11 of 26) were knowledgeable about admissions requirements. However, consistent with the literature, Latino/a families' knowledge of the higher education structure was limited (Post, 1990; Tornatzky et al., 2002). The lack of information is a contributing factor to parents' inability to provide concrete advice as to where students should apply. Moreover, results indicate that

parents misunderstand the various ways institutional status and outcomes are used to establish prestige. Equally important is the finding that when parents (19 of 26) say they want a college education for their children, they are referring to a 4-year university. Although Latino/a parents do not understand the structure of higher education, they do not see it as a monolithic set of institutions. They interpret it as binary structure between 2-year and 4-year colleges.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

Latino/a students have the lowest college degree attainment rates in comparison to students of other racial/ethnic groups. This educational gap is projected to widen as the Latino/a population throughout the U.S. continues to grow. (College Board, 2008; Foundation, 2009; Kirsch, 2007). The need to involve and educate Latino/a parents on admissions requirements, ways to fund a college education, and the higher education structure is more important than ever. Students rely on guidance from parents and siblings when choosing colleges (Ceja, 2004, McDonough, 1997). However, the degree to which Latino/a parents can assist their children is limited by their own knowledge (Tornatsky et al., 2002). Yet, little research exists on the ways Latino/a parents work with their children around issues regarding college choice. The majority of the literature (Ceja, 2006; Gandara, 1995; Ortiz, 2011) has focused on student's perceptions of their parents' involvement in their educational trajectories. For this reason, it is imperative that research with Latino/a parents on this topic continues to grow.

This chapter is organized in seven sections: it briefly summarizes the study's findings and significance, describes implications of the study for practice and research. Finally, it describes the limitations of the study and concludes with a reflection on the parents who participated in the study.

Summary of Findings

Interviews with Latino/a parents from the Bright Futures provided vivid firsthand accounts about the ways they work with their children around college choice. An analysis of interviews with 26 Latino/a families about their perceived role in their child's college choice and search process revealed two thematic groupings that indicate participants provide both direct and indirect support to their children. From these two main groupings, four themes emerged related to parental support: academic, administrative, aspirational and familial. The first two themes, academic and administrative, fall under the thematic grouping of direct parental support and include components like providing assistance with homework, attending parent/teacher conferences or school events, and saving money to cover college expenses. The remaining two themes are categorized under indirect parental support, which includes components such as providing motivation and encouragement to accomplish goals, communicating expectations, providing verbal support and encouragement, and using family's lived experiences or personal struggles as stories of empowerment. The data indicate that although Latino/a families provide some direct support, they mostly support their children via indirect approaches.

Almost all Latino/a families (25 of 26) in this study expect their child to attend college. However, most participants felt uninformed about institutional status/outcomes to make recommendations as to where to apply. The decision as to which college students should attend is solely left for them to make. Families demonstrated some knowledge about ways low-income families can finance a college education. Yet their responses also indicated misunderstanding of key terms. Families used the general term "financial aid" when speaking about federal and state grants. Equally important, was the finding that experience financing an older child's college education leads parents to understand that in-state public colleges are within reach. Families

without this shared experience expressed uncertainty about their ability to finance a college education even though their annual income makes them eligible for federal and state grants, which cover tuition related expenses.

Parents' immigration status brought to light issues regarding college location restriction and ability to borrow federal loans. These parents explained that they encourage their children to attend local colleges because their undocumented status restricts them from traveling in case of an emergency. Parents also expressed willingness to borrow federal loans to help their children with college expenses but being unable to do so because they do not meet the citizenship and residency eligibility requirements.

Latino/a families demonstrated some knowledge about admissions requirements to 4-year public universities. However, more than half of families indicated that they are not familiar with the higher education structure. Families suggested that a university's prestige is important in helping students obtain well-paying jobs, but failed to mention factors such as retention, completion and/or institutional rankings. Despite their unfamiliarity, families' responses indicate that they do not have a monolithic view of higher education. Families made a distinction between 2-year and 4-year colleges/universities. Suggesting that they see higher education as a binary set of institutions.

Significance of Findings

This study's findings highlight the ways in which families support their children during the college choice and search process. Latino/a families in the study support findings (Ceja, 2004; Gandara, 1995; Ortiz, 2011) that Latino/a parents provide high degrees of indirect support and contradict findings (McDonough, 1997) that suggest they provide very little direct support.

This finding is contrary to what I expected to find as I initially believed that Latino/a families predominately provide indirect support to their children. This is significant given that parents without a formal college education reported providing direct academic support. The results indicate that a college education is not the only measure of how a parent is able to offer direct support. More importantly, the hands-on discovery based approach employed by a participant suggests a possible intersection of direct and indirect approaches. The parent acknowledged his personal limitations and searched for information from other resources to assist his children with homework. His approach is direct, yet he is also actively supporting the maintenance and growth of his children's aspirations.

In regards to the specific ways Latino/a families participate in the college search and choice process, findings suggest that families engage in discussions/conversations about college plans but do not provide advice as to where to apply because of their limited college knowledge. Although families could not provide direct advice, 18 of 26 families reported discussing college choices with their children. They were able to report their child's first college choice and living options. Family responses indicate that the majority of universities are located in California. Only seven families reported placing restrictions on location. This finding was unexpected given that research by Strom and Strom (2005) indicated that Latino/a parents prefer their children to attend college close to home. It would have been interesting to investigate students' reasoning behind their choices. Do they think their parents will not support their decision to enroll to college out of state when they in fact do?

Additionally, consistent with previous research (Auerbach et. al., 2004), almost half of families (12 of 26) reported having concerns about their child's safety while in college. However, inconsistent with the literature (Auerbach et. al, 2004) was the finding that participants

did not express concerns about female children going away for college. This was a surprising finding given that half (13 of 26) of the families provided their perspective in relation to their daughters. It is possible that participation in the Bright Futures program eases parents' concerns however a clarifying question was not included in the interview protocol to confidently make this assertion.

The perspectives provided by the Latino/a families in this study shed light on parents' knowledge about a college/university's prestige, financing a college education, and the higher education structure. The significance of each of these findings will be described next.

First, the majority of families (25 of 26) expect their child to go to college. Families place a strong emphasis on obtaining a college degree because it confers a wide range of benefits, including better jobs and higher earnings. It was interesting to find that twelve (of 26) families think it is important to attend the very best most prestigious university, while an almost equal number, 11 of 26, do not think prestige is important. This finding is unique in that the families who think prestige is important do so because they associate it with better job prospects. This demonstrates some level of understanding about the way institutional characteristics may positively impact students' earning potential. While families who think prestige is not important, believe individual traits, not institutional characteristics, are the most important determinants of success. Although families demonstrated some knowledge about the importance of attending a prestigious university, overall responses indicate a general lack of knowledge about institutional factors such as: high academic rigor, having renowned faculty, low student to faculty ratios, time to degree, selectivity, retention and graduation rates. As a result future parent workshops should also focus on this topic.

Similarly, families also demonstrated general knowledge about ways to fund their child's college education, but their responses also indicate misunderstanding of the types of aid. Twenty-two families indicated that they plan to finance their child's education with financial aid, loans and savings. The use of the term "financial aid" indicates they are knowledgeable about resources available to finance a college education. However, this group of families used the term "financial aid" when speaking about federal and state grants. The general use of the term suggests that parents are grouping the different types of aid into one general umbrella. This finding is important for practitioners since it illustrates that parent workshops on financial aid help Latino/a parents gain access to important knowledge. However, it also shows the need to repeat and present information in different ways to give families the opportunity to fully understand all the complexities about financial aid.

Correspondingly, responses pertaining to knowledge about the higher education structure also have conflicting findings. Families (11 of 26) reported being familiar with CSU and UC admissions requirements, yet no one made references about private schools or out of state universities. This finding parallels students' college choices as reported by families in Chapter 4. It would be interesting to interview students and parents together to explore the reasons students' are limiting their college choices to their home state and whether families are focusing on understanding the colleges/universities their children are interested in as a way manage information. Knowing that Latino/a families do not have information about the higher education structure, it is important to develop comprehensive workshops to educate both students and parents on the differences among 4-year universities to expand their range of college choices. Perhaps joint student/parent workshops can help bridge the gap.

Moreover, the results indicate that families are not familiar with the higher education structure as a whole. This finding was an unexpected because the Bright Futures program conducts workshops on the topic throughout the year. Nevertheless, families were able to distinguish between 2-year and 4-year colleges, suggesting that they do not have a monolithic view of higher education. The majority of families (19 of 26) indicated that when they say they want a college education for their children, they are talking about a 4-year college. It is possible that families' binary view of the higher education structure is attributed to a lack of understanding about the ways 4-year universities differ from each other.

Implications for Practice

It is important to understand parent perspectives when developing culturally relevant parent workshops. When parents share their perspectives, researchers and practitioners have a better understanding of parents' background knowledge, abilities, and limitations. This study supports findings (Auerbach et. al., 2004; Fann et. al., 2009) that programs that encourage parental involvement counter knowledge deficits. Families who participated in Bright Futures workshops demonstrated some understanding about admissions requirements, financing a college education, and types of colleges. At the same time findings also demonstrate the need to engage families as early as middle school to fully understand all of the complexities around college preparation and college choice since it directly affects students' retention and completion. Preparing parents to assist and advice their children through the college choice and search process takes more than a few workshops once students are already enrolled in high school. Therefore, a possible remedy is for middle schools to develop comprehensive programs around preparation for university eligibility and collaborate with high schools and college preparation

programs. Yosso (2005) suggests acknowledging the assets of communities of color have at their disposition and teach them to build on their strengths. Thus, another suggestion inspired by the hands-on collaborative approach used by a parent to support his child, is to teach parents on ways to tap into other resources for information and guidance.

Financial aid is complex. Understanding the different types of financial aid and how they are awarded takes time and repetition. Families' lack of complete knowledge about the types of financial aid highlights the importance of continuously evaluating the impact of workshops on participants. The information collected is important to make the necessary changes to the curriculum so that it best reaches the target population.

Although only one parent spoke about her immigration status as a deterrent to borrow federal loans, it is important to discuss its impact on students. Parents' undocumented status does not prevent their children with U.S. citizenship or permanent residency from qualifying for federal and state grants, loans, and scholarships. However, undocumented parents' inability to borrow federal loans places a higher burden on the student to pay for expenses not covered by Pell and Cal Grants such as housing and costs of living. This is noteworthy given that the University of California requires a \$9,500 student contribution from every student regardless of income (UC Counselors Conference, September 2015). At first glance, the student contribution appears equitable. The amount is the same for all students. However upon closer inspection, one can see its disparate application. The contribution represents approximately one fourth to one third of a low-income family's gross annual earnings. Scholarship awards can help reduce students' contribution. But, how does this impact students enrollment decisions when they do not receive sufficient scholarships to cover the expense? The simple answer is to take out loans and increase their debt totals and participate in work-study. Therefore, it is important to review

financial aid policies to reduce out of pocket expenses for low-income students and provide alternative financing options for undocumented parents.

Implications for Future Research

The literature review presented limited research available about Latino/a parents. This research project highlights additional research needed in the following areas: (1) parents hands-on discovery based direct assistance, (2) the effect of parents' undocumented status on students' college choices, (3) idea that the student is the university, and (4) perceptions about status differences between private and public universities.

Although Latino/a families in this study did not have a college degree, they managed to provide direct academic support to their children. The hands-on discovery based approach used by a parent was unique in that it challenges the idea that a formal education is the only measure a parent can offer direct support. This unique approach requires further research since its use suggests a possible intersection of direct and indirect approaches. This area should be research further.

Parents' concern about their inability to travel if their children went to college out of state or country given their undocumented status highlights the importance of researching its effect on students' college choices. Therefore, future research can investigate: (1) if parents' desire to have their children attend a college close to home related to parents' immigration status and (2) if parents' are more open to having their children choose out of state colleges when they do not have travel restrictions due to their citizenship status. Another research opportunity would be to interview students as they decide among their college options. It is important to investigate whether students, not their parents, place restrictions on their options given their parents'

inability to travel. Results from such study can help identify the ways in which Latino/a students make college choices.

Further investigation is also needed on parents' understanding of college prestige. The focus may look into what parents mean when they say "the individual is the university" and reasons for thinking that individualism and self-determination are more important in obtaining jobs after college graduation than a university's prestige. Research in this area could help identify common misconceptions and address them in the parent workshop series.

Findings from this research project indicate that Latino/a families' participation in college access workshops increase their knowledge about admission requirements. Unfortunately, families were not able to differentiate between public and private 4-year universities. Currently, there are no studies that focus on parents' perceptions about status differences between private and public universities. A study that examines parents understanding of public and private universities after participation in workshops may be useful to college access programs and high schools. Results from such study may help determine whether participation altered their perspective of the higher education structure and whether the newfound knowledge changes the ways they participate in the college search and choice process with their children. More importantly, results may inform other college access programs and high schools on how parents' needs should be addressed.

Research Limitations

This project had several limitations. The first has to do with the sample selection process. The study does not include a representative sample of individuals from the general Latino/a population. Study participants were selected from a single college access program that serves a

predominately Latino/a population, low-income families, and potential first-generation college students. The sample may be biased because participants were not randomly selected the general population of parents with children in high school or different types of college access programs. It is possible that families who self-select to participate in the Bright Futures program differ from the general population since they voluntarily choose to participate in program activities/services.

The same can be said of the families from the Bright Futures program who chose to participate in the study. Those who participated in the study may differ from those who did not participate. As a result, it is possible that the participant sample oversamples families who have strong opinions and under samples people who are disinterested in participating in the research study.

Second, families have received various “treatment dosages” depending on the number of workshops they have attended. Participation in the program can be considered a “treatment” because participants receive resources designed to strengthen student academic performance and facilitate entry and retention in postsecondary institutions of higher education. This type of recruitment source limits the generalizability of findings since responses may not be representative of Latino/a families not participating in college access programs. Moreover, differences in responses within the group may be attributed to the ordering or sequence of the workshops and the information received, thus affecting the results.

Third, the sample size was small (26 parents) and participants were recruited from one college access program. Future research that seeks to examine a similar topic and population should include more families, randomly selected from various college access programs or high schools and should include families who have never participated in a workshop. Expanding the pool may provide greater insight on parents’ perceived role in their child’s college search and

choice process. Moreover, including a mix of programs (those with and without parent workshops) may offer a better understanding of whether any differences in knowledge can be attributed to such programs.

A fourth limitation is my dual role as a practitioner researcher. Given the power differential in the practitioner- participant relationship, families may have been inclined to positively skew their responses particularly when asked questions regarding their participation in the program. To minimize this threat, I reminded families that there were no right or wrong answers and encouraged them to provide honest answers and examples when possible to support their responses, especially when discussing knowledge of admissions requirements and financial aid.

Conclusion

I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to interview Latino/a families from the Bright Futures program. The families who participated in this study shared their goals and aspirations for their children and their experiences encouraging their children to be the first in the family to pursue a college degree. Their stories were similar to what my mother experienced as I prepared to be the first in the family to enroll in a 4-year university. Although my family and I shared similar experiences as those shared by the study participants, I did not have to limit my college choices due to my mother's inability to travel given her citizenship status. This also led me to reflect on freshmen move in day and the anxiety associated with it. I am thankful that my family was able to travel with me and provide reassurance and comfort. I cannot imagine what it is like for students to have to go through this experience on their own or what parents go through as they see their child move away for college and not be able to accompany them.

During the interviews, I constantly reminded myself to not express agreement, both verbal and non-verbal, with families' responses. Families were surprised at my interest in investigating the ways they work with their children around college going, but were eager to share their stories. Perhaps this was the first time they were given the opportunity to reflect and share their interactions with their children as they prepare to go to college.

The data analysis phase allowed me to reflect on the many challenges Latino/a families face in understanding all the complexities associated with the college search and choice process. Their challenges highlighted the need for practitioners, such as myself, to present material in clear easy to understand format, given parents' educational levels, and the need to present the material several times to reinforce knowledge.

It was an honor to have the opportunity to listen to participant's educational aspirations for their children and their hopes and dreams for a better future. I was moved when parents expressed gratitude for aiding them in understanding college admissions. I particularly enjoyed hearing that families feel better equipped to help their children prepare for college. Participation in the parent workshops also gave them greater motivation to push their children to become the first in the family to obtain a bachelor's degree. Parents' aspirational capital keeps them focused on the end goal, to have a child graduate from college. Their goal is no longer a dream; it is an attainable plan.

Appendix A
Interview Protocol

This study aims to identify the ways families plan for college. This may help identify and create workshops for parents. This study is entirely voluntary. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study without penalty.

	Interview Questions	Corresponding Research Question(s)
1.	How important is a college education for success in life?	
2.	As a parent, describe your role in helping your child prepare for college? Follow-up: Has your role changed over time?	Q1
3.	Do you expect your child to go to college? Follow-up: If so, how do you convey that expectation? What do you say or do? What have you done to help? What type of advice do you give for where to apply?	Q2
4.	Where does your child want to go to college? Where do you want them to go? Why? Do you negotiate his/her options? Follow-up: How will you reconcile different goals? Do you put restrictions (location, price)? Have you persuaded your child to consider universities of your choosing?	Q2
5.	Where does your child plan to live during their first year of college? Follow-up: Do you have any concerns? Does location affect their college options?	Q2
6.	How will you pay for college? Is your child expected to work and go to school? Follow-up: How will finances impact their college options? Do you think this will affect the type of school they go to?	Q2
7.	How familiar are you with the UC, CSU, community colleges and private universities? Follow-up: How familiar are you with admission requirements (competitiveness), types of degrees awarded, and prestige or graduation rates?	Q3
8.	How important is it for you that your child is accepted into the very best most prestigious college/university? Follow-up: Do you think the type of college your son / daughter is graduates from can impact their future job prospects? Why?	Q3
9.	For you, what is the most important factor in choosing a college? (cost and availability of financial aid, reputation and / or prestige)	Q3
10.	Is the type of college/university your child attends important to you? Why?	Q3
11.	How involved have you been in the program? Follow-up: How has your involvement with the program helped you develop a richer understanding of university preparation? How has your participation changed your perception and practice of encouraging and working with your son/daughter about college going?	

Appendix A
Protocolo de entrevista

Este estudio tiene como objetivo identificar las formas en las familias planean para la universidad. Esto puede ayudar a identificar y crear talleres para padres. Este estudio es totalmente voluntario. Si usted participa voluntariamente en este estudio, usted puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento y dejar de participar sin penalización.

Preguntas de entrevista		
1.	¿Qué tan importante es una educación universitaria para tener éxito en la vida?	
2.	Como padre, describa su papel en ayudar a su hijo a prepararse para la universidad? Seguimiento: ¿Ha cambiado su papel con el tiempo?	Q1
3.	¿Espera que su hijo vaya a la universidad? Seguimiento: Si es así, ¿Cómo transmite esa expectativa a su hijo? ¿Qué es lo que dice o hace? Describa los tipos de cosas que ha hecho para ayudar a su hijo a elegir universidades? ¿Qué tipo de consejos le da sobre adonde debería de ir?	Q2
4.	¿A cuál universidad quiere ir su hijo? A cual universidad le gustaría a usted que él/ella valla? ¿Porque? ¿Cómo negocian sus opciones? Seguimiento: ¿Cómo va a reconciliar sus diferentes objetivos? ¿Usted pone restricciones (de ubicación o precio)? Ha tratado de convencer a su hijo/a a considerar universidades de su elección?	Q2
5.	¿En dónde piensa vivir su hijo/a durante su primer año en la universidad? Seguimiento: ¿Tiene alguna inquietud o preocupación? ¿Tiene la ubicación de la universidad un efecto en sus opciones universitarias?	Q2
6.	¿Cómo van a pagar los costos universitarios? ¿Espera que a su hijo/a trabaje y estudie? Seguimiento: ¿Cómo van afectar sus finanzas sus opciones universitarias? ¿Cree que esto afectará el tipo de universidad a la que vaya?	Q2
7.	¿Está familiarizado con las diferentes tipos de universidades UC, CSU, colegios comunitarios y universidades privadas? Seguimiento: ¿Está familiarizado con los requisitos de admisión (competitividad), tipos de títulos otorgados, prestigio o porcentaje de estudiantes que terminan sus estudios universitarios?	Q3
8.	¿Es importante es para usted que su hijo sea aceptado a una universidad prestigiosa? Seguimiento: Usted cree que el tipo de universidad de la que se gradué afecte sus posibilidades de empleo? ¿Porque?	Q3
9.	¿Para usted, qué es lo más importante para elegir una universidad? (costo y la disponibilidad de ayuda financiera, la reputación y /o prestigio)	Q3
10.	¿Es importante para usted el tipo de universidad que su hijo/a vaya? ¿Por qué?	Q3
11.	¿Qué tan involucrado ha estado en el programa? Seguimiento: ¿Le ha ayudado el programa a entender los requisitos de preparación para la universidad? ¿Cómo ha cambiado su percepción y manera en la que trabaja con su hijo/a para prepararse para la universidad?	

**Appendix B
Parent Questionnaire**

Survey # _____

Demographics

1. Gender: (1) Male (2) Female

2. What is your ethnicity?
 1. Asian/ Pacific Islander
 2. Black/ African American
 3. Hispanic/Latino
 1. Mexican/ Mexican American, Chicano
 2. Honduran
 3. Salvadorian
 4. Other Hispanic origin: _____
 4. Native American/ American Indian
 5. White
 6. Other: _____

Education

3. Mother's Birth Country: _____

4. Mother Educated in: (1) U.S. (2) Home country (3) Other

5. Mother's Highest Level of Education Completed: **Circle one**

Elementary School:	1	2	3	4	5	
Middle School:	6	7	8			
High School:	9	10	11	12		
Trade School:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Junior College:	1	2	3	4	5	6
College (4-year):	1	2	3	4	5	6

6. College Completed: (1) YES (2) NO
 - 6.1 If yes, which degree?
 - (a) A.A./A.S
 - (b) B.A./B.S.
 - (c) M.A./M.S.
 - (d) Ph.D.

7. Father's Birth Country: _____

8. Father Educated in: (1) U.S. (2) Home country (3) Other

9. Father's Highest Level of Education Completed: **Circle One**

Elementary School:	1	2	3	4	5	
Middle School:	6	7	8			
High School:	9	10	11	12		
Trade School:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Junior College:	1	2	3	4	5	6
College (4-year):	1	2	3	4	5	6

10. College Completed: (1) YES (2) NO

10.1 If yes, which degree?

(a) A.A./A.S. (b) B.A./B.S. (c) M.A./M.S. (d) Ph.D.

Family Size & Income

11. What is your marital status?

1. Single/Never married
2. Married or In Domestic Partnership
3. Widowed
4. Divorced
5. Separated

12. What is the number of people in the household, including you? _____

13. What is the number of children? _____

14. Number of children in college/university: _____

15. Household income (circle one):

1. \$0 - \$19,999
2. \$20,000 - \$29,999
3. \$30,000 - \$39,999
4. \$40,000 - \$49,999
5. \$50,000 - \$59,999
6. \$60,000 - \$69,999

Appendix B
Encuesta de Padres

Survey # _____

Perfil Demográfico

1. Sexo: (1) Hombre (2) Mujer

2. ¿Cuál es su ascendencia u origen étnico?:
 - a. Asiático / Islas del Pacífico
 - b. Negra / afroamericano
 - c. Hispano / Latino
 - i. Mexicano/ México Americano, Chicano
 - ii. Hondureño
 - iii. Salvadoreño
 - iv. Otro origen Hispano: _____
 - d. Nativo Americano / Indio Americano
 - e. Blanco
 - f. Otro: _____

Educación

3. País de nacimiento de madre: _____

4. Madre recibió educación escolar en:
(1) Estados Unidos (2) País de origen (3) Otro

5. El nivel más alto de educación completado por la madre: Circule uno

Primaria:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Secundaria:	7	8	9			
Preparatoria:	10	11	12			
Escuela de oficio:	1	2	3			
Collegio communitario:	1	2	3			
Bachillerato:	1	2	3	4		

6. Termino sus estudios universitarios: (1) SI (2) NO
 - 6.1 En caso afirmativo, que titulo?
(a) A.A./A.S (b) B.A./B.S. (c) M.A./M.S. (d) Ph.D.

7. País de nacimiento de padre: _____

8. Padre recibió educación escolar en:
(1) Estados Unidos (2) País de origen (3) Otro

9. El nivel más alto de educación completado por la madre: Circule uno

Primaria:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Secundaria:	7	8	9			
Preparatoria:	10	11	12			
Escuela de oficio:	1	2	3			
Collegio communitario:	1	2	3			
Bachillerato:	1	2	3	4		

10. Termino sus estudios universitarios: (1) SI (2) NO

10.1 En caso afirmativo, cual título?

(a) A.A./A.S (b) B.A./B.S. (c) M.A./M.S. (d) Ph.D.

Tamaño de Familia e Ingresos

11. Estado civil:

1. Soltero(a)/ Nunca se ha casado
2. Casado(a) o en Pareja Domestica
3. Viudo(a)
4. Divorciado(a)
5. Separado(a)

12. Número de personas en el hogar, incluyendo usted: _____

13. Numero de niños: _____

14. Número de estudiantes en colegio o universidad?: _____

15. Ingreso del hogar (marque uno):

- a. \$0 - \$19,999
- b. \$20,000 - \$29,999
- c. \$30,000 - \$39,999
- d. \$40,000 - \$49,999
- e. \$50,000 - \$59,999
- f. \$60,000 - \$69,999

Appendix C
Preliminary Code Book

Research Question 1: What role, if any, do Latino/a parents play in their child’s college search and choice process?			
Direct Support	Definition: active, direct engagement in the college choice and search process		
Indirect Parental Support	Definition: no direct engagement in the college choice and search process		
Research Question 2: Given the role they play, in what specific/tangible ways, if any, do Latino parents influence and participate in the college search and choice process?			
Types of Direct Parental Support	<p style="text-align: center;">Academic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with HW • Participation in P/T conferences/other school activities • Requires child to participate in tutoring 	<p style="text-align: center;">Home Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No chores/focus HW • Study before chores • Not required to babysit younger siblings • Parent provides financially for student- does not require student to contribute 	<p style="text-align: center;">Administrative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filling out forms • Writing essays • Meet deadlines • Helps select major, choose a campus, determine cost, campus visits, saving \$\$ for college, research academic reputation, social fit, geographical constraints
Types of Indirect Parental Support	<p style="text-align: center;">Aspirational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides motivation & encouragement to accomplish goals • Sets expectations • Discuss college plans • Maintain hopes and dreams for the future in the face of barriers 	<p style="text-align: center;">Linguistic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates expectations • Verbal support/ encouragement, messages attached to a specific type of higher education outcome • Tell students to get good grades • Storytelling 	<p style="text-align: center;">Familial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition • Family’s lived experiences as encouragement • Economic, social, and occupational struggles become stories of empowerment

	<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to other social support networks or resources to obtain information 	<p>Navigational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills to maneuver through social institutions 	<p>Resistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppositional behavior that challenges inequity
Research Question 3: What are Latino/a parents' knowledge of the structure of higher education?			
Knowledge	<p>Knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selectivity • Admissions requirements • Prestige • Rankings • Levels of degree types awarded • Academic reputation • Cost 		

Appendix D
University of California, Los Angeles
Participant Consent Form

Please consider being part of research that aims to benefit Latino/a parents and their children.

You are invited to participate in a voluntary study conducted by Nelly Alvarado, Principal Investigator, sponsored by Dr. Richard Wagoner from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) for her doctoral dissertation.

You have been selected as a potential participant in this study because your son/daughter is a participant in the Upward Bound Math Science Program at the El Camino College Compton Educational Center. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not adversely affect your relationship with the program.

Why is this study being done?

This study aims to identify the ways families plan for college. This may help identify and create workshops for parents.

What will happen if you take part in this research study?

If you agree to participate in this study, we will ask you to:

1. *Participate in a 30-40 minute interview*
2. *Complete a short questionnaire, and*
3. *Be available to answer follow-up questions with the principal researcher, if needed.*

You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Will information you provide be kept confidential?

This study is entirely confidential. All participants will create pseudonyms to protect their identity. Your name will not appear with any of your responses. You have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part. The recordings will only be used for educational purposes and will be erased at the conclusion of the research study.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts you expect from participation in this study?

There are minimal potential risks from participation in this study. You will be asked several questions about your involvement in your child's education.

Are there any potential benefits you can expect from participation in this study?

The results of the research may help the UBMS Program create a series of Parent Workshops.

Your participant rights

This study is entirely voluntary. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study without penalty.

Payment for your participation

You will receive a \$10 honorarium for participation. You will receive full payment for your participation if you start but do not complete the interview and questionnaire, or if you skip questions. Your name will also be entered to win an ipad mini.

Who can you contact if you have questions about this study?

The Research Team:

If you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding the research, you may contact one of the researchers. Please contact:

Nelly Alvarado, Principal Investigator, Doctor of Education Student at UCLA Educational Leadership Program

UCLA, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

Email: nellyalvarado01@gmail.com

Phone: (562) 225-7434

Dr. Richard Wagoner, Adjunct Professor, (Co-Chair)

UCLA, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

Moore Hall 1029E

405 Hilgard Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521

Email: wagoner@gseis.ucla.edu

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP)

You may contact OHRPP if you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study or have concerns or suggestions and you want to speak with someone other than the researchers about the study.

11000 Kinross Ave. Suite 211, Box 951694

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Name of Participant: _____

Participant’s Signature: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D
University of California, Los Angeles
Formulario de Consentimiento del Participante

Por favor considere ser parte de una investigación que tiene como objetivo ayudar a padres latinos y sus hijos.

Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio voluntariamente realizado por Nelly Alvarado, investigadora principal, patrocinado por el Dr. Richard Wagoner del departamento de Graduate School of Education and Information Studies en la Universidad of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) para su tesis doctoral.

Usted ha sido seleccionado como un posible participante en este estudio debido a que su hijo(a) es un participante en el Programa Upward Bound Math & Science en El Camino College Compton Center. Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Su decisión de participar o no participar en el estudio no afectara negativamente su participación en el programa.

¿Por qué se realiza este estudio?

Este estudio tiene como objetivo identificar las formas en las familias planean para la universidad. Esto puede ayudar a identificar y crear talleres para padres.

¿Qué pasa si toma parte en este estudio?

Si acepta participar en este estudio, se le pedirá que:

1. *Participe en una entrevista de 30 a 40 minutos*
2. *Completar un cuestionario breve, y*
3. *Estar disponible para responder a preguntas de seguimiento con el investigador principal, si es necesario.*

Usted puede negarse a responder cualquier pregunta que no quiera contestar y aún así permanecer en el estudio.

¿Será la información que proporcione mantenida en confidencia?

Este estudio es totalmente confidencial. Todos los participantes crearan seudónimos para proteger su identidad. Su nombre no aparecerá en ninguna de sus respuestas. Usted tiene el derecho de revisar la grabación hecha como parte del estudio para determinar si debe ser editada o borrada en parte o totalidad. Las grabaciones sólo se utilizarán con fines educativos y se borrarán en la conclusión del estudio.

¿Hay riesgos o molestias esperadas durante su participación en este estudio?

Existen riesgos potenciales mínimos de participación en este estudio. Se le hará varias preguntas acerca de su participación en la educación de su hijo(a).

¿Hay beneficios por participar en este estudio?

Los resultados de la investigación pueden ayudar al Programa UBMS crear una serie de talleres para padres.

Sus derechos como participante

Este estudio es totalmente voluntario. Si usted participa voluntariamente en este estudio, usted puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento y dejar de participar sin penalización.

Pago por su participación

Usted recibirá un honorario de \$10 por su participación. Usted recibirá el pago total de participación si empieza pero no termina la entrevista y el cuestionario o si se salta preguntas. Su nombre también entrara a un sorteo para ganar in iPad mini.

¿A quién puede llamar si tiene preguntas acerca de este estudio?

El equipo de investigación:

Si tiene alguna pregunta, comentario o inquietud con respecto a la investigación, puede comunicarse con uno de los investigadores. Por favor, póngase en contacto con:

Nelly Alvarado, investigadora principal, Doctor of Education Student at UCLA Educational Leadership Program

UCLA, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

Email: nellyalvarado01@gmail.com

Teléfono: (562) 225-7434

Dr. Richard Wagoner, Profesor Adjunto (Copresidente)

UCLA, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

Moore Salón 1029E

405 Hilgard Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521

Email: wagoner@gseis.ucla.edu

UCLA Oficina del Programa de Protección de la Investigación Humana (OHRPP)

Puede contactar OHRPP si tiene preguntas acerca de sus derechos durante su participación en este estudio o tiene inquietudes o sugerencias y quiere hablar con alguien que no sean los investigadores del estudio.

11000 Kinross Ave. Suite 211, Box 951694

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

CONSENTIMIENTO DEL PARTICIPANTE

Nombre del participante: _____

Firma del participante: _____

Firma del Investigador: _____

Fecha: _____

References

- Assembly Bill 130. (2011). California Statute.
- Assembly Bill 131. (2011). California Statute.
- Assembly Bill 540. (2001). California Statute.
- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Planty, M., Snyder, T., Bianco, K., Fox, M., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Drake, L. (2010). The condition of education 2010 (NCES 2010-028). In National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC.
- Auerbach, S. (2004). Engaging Latino parents in supporting college pathways: Lessons from a college access program. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(2), 125-145. doi: 10.1177/1538192903262514
- Baum, S., & Payea, K. (2010). Trends in student aid 2011 (1-32): The College Board.
- Baum, S., Ma, J., & Payea, K. (2010). Education pays 2010: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society: College Board Advocacy & Policy Center
- Bean, J. P., & Metzner, B. S. (1985). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Review of Educational Research* 55(4).
- Berkner, L., & Chavez, L. (1997). Access to postsecondary education for the 1992 high school graduates. Washington DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction: Papers in the sociology of education. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change*.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passerson, C. (1977). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. M., & McPherson, M. S. (2009). *Crossing the finish line: Completing college at America's public universities*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Burciaga, R., Perez-Huber, & L., Solorzano, D. G. (2009). *Going back to the headwaters: Examining Latina/o educational attainment and achievement through a framework of hope*. *Handbook at Latinos and Education*, 422-427. New York and London. Routledge.
- California Community Colleges Chancellors Office. (2005-2006). Student headcount by ethnicity statewide for 2005-2006 from https://misweb.cccco.edu/mis/onlinestat/studdemo_annual_college_rpt.cfm?RequestTimeout=1000
- California Community Colleges Chancellors Office. (2010-2011). Student headcount by ethnicity statewide for 2010-2011 from https://misweb.cccco.edu/mis/onlinestat/studdemo_annual_college_rpt.cfm?RequestTimeout=1000
- California Postsecondary Education Commission.
- California Student Aid Commission. (2011). *Competitive Cal Grant Program 2007-08 to 2009-2010*.
- California Student Aid Commission. (2015, October 19). *California Dream Act: Frequently asked questions (FAQ) for parents and students*. Retrieved from http://www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt_frm/cal_grant_dream_act_faqs.pdf
- Ceja, M. (2004). Chicana college aspirations and the role of parents: Developing educational resiliency. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(4), 338-362.
- Choy, S. P. (2001). Students whose parents did not go to college: Postsecondary access,

- persistence, and attainment (NCES No. 2001-06). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Chrispeels, J. H. & Rivero, E. (2009). Engaging Latino families for student success: how parent education can reshape parents' sense of place in the education of their children. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76(9), 2, 119-169.
- College Board. (2008). Coming to our senses: Education and the American future, Report of the Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education. New York: NY. Retrieved from <https://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/coming-to-our-senses-college-board-2008.pdf>
- College Board. (2011). Trends in college pricing 2011. Retrieved from https://advocacy.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/2011_College_Pricing_11b-3631_Final_Web.pdf
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Deferred Action for Childhood Immigrants. (2012).
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1990). Literacy for empowerment: The role of parents in children's education. London: Falmer Press.
- Fann, A., Jarsky, K. M., & McDonough, P. M. (2009). Parent involvement in the college planning process: A case study of P-20 collaboration. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 8(4), 374-393.
- Fry, R. (2002). Latinos in higher education: Many enroll, too few graduate. PEW Hispanic Center.
- Gabay-Egozi, L., Shavit, Y., & Yaish, M. (2010). Curricular choice: A test of rational

- choice model of education. *European Sociological Review*, 26(4), 447-463.
- Gandara, P. C. (1995). *Over the ivy walls: The educational mobility to low-income Chicanos*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Gandara, P., Larson, K., Mehan, H., & Rumberger, R. (1998). Capturing Latino students in the academic pipeline. *A publication of the Chicano/Latino Policy Project* 1(1). Institute for the Study of Social Change. University of California, Berkley. Retrieved from www.ucop.edu/cprc/documents/pipeline.dpf
- Gandara, P. (2002a). A study of high school Puente: What we have learned about preparing Latino youth for postsecondary education. *Educational Policy*, 16(4), 474-495.
- Gandara, P. (2002b). Meeting common goals. In W.G. Tierney & Hagedorn, L. S. (Ed.), *Increasing Access to College: Extending Opportunities for all students* (81-103). New York: State University Press.
- Gorman, J. C., & Balter, L. (1997). Culturally sensitive parent education: A critical review of quantitative research. *Review of Educational Research*, 67, 339-368.
- Guzman, A. (2015). Latinos' student loan debt and the implications: Delaying the American Dream. *The Harvard journal of Hispanic Policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.harvardhispanic.org/latinos-student-loan-debt-and-the-implications-delaying-the-american-dream/>
- Hawkins, D. A., & Lautz, J. (2005). NACAC state of college admission. Alexandria, VA: The National Association for College Admission Counseling.
- Hagedorn. (2004).
- Heller, D. E. (1997). Student price response in higher education: An update to Leslie and Brinkman. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 68(6), 624-659.
- Horn, L., & Nunez, A. (2000). Mapping the road to college: First-generation students'

- math track, planning strategies, and context of support. In I.O.E.S. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, (Vol. NCES 2000-153).
- Horn, L. J., & Chen, X. (1998). *Toward resiliency: At-risk students who make it to college*: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Horn, L. J., Chen, X., & Chapman, C. (2003). *Getting ready to pay for college: What students and their parents know about the costs of college tuition and what they are doing to find out*. National Center Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. NCES 2003-030.
- Hossler, D., Hu, S., & Schmit, J. (1998). *Predicting student sensitivity to tuition and financial aid*. San Diego: American Educational Research Association.
- Immigration Policy Center. (2007). *Dreams deferred: The costs of ignoring undocumented students*.
- Jun, A., & Colyar, J. (2002). *Parental guidance suggested*. In W.G. Tierney & Hagedorn, L. S. (Ed.), *Increasing Access to College: Extending Possibilities for all students*. Albany, NY: State University Press.
- Kane, T. J. (1995). *Rising public college tuition and college entry: How well do public subsidies promote access to college?* In N. B. o. E. Research (Ed.), (pp-1-31). Cambridge, MA.
- Kinzie, J., Palmer, M., Hayek, J., Hossler, D., Jacob, S. A., & Cummings, H. (2004). *Fifty years of college choice: Social, political and institutional influences on the decision-making process (Vol. 5)*: Lumina Foundation for Higher Education.
- Kirsch, I. S., Braun, H. I., Yamamoto, K. and Sum, A. (2007). *America's perfect storm*:

- Three forces changing our nation's future. Policy Information Report. Policy Evaluation and Research Center, Policy Information Center, Educational Testing Service. Pennsylvania State University.
- Kirst, M. W. (2008). Secondary schools and colleges must work together. *The NEA Higher Education Journal: Thought and Action*, 24, 111-122.
- Leech, B. L. (2002). Asking questions: Techniques for semistructured interviews. *Political Science and Politics*, 35(4) 665-668.
- Leslie, L. L., & Brinkman, P. T. (1987). Student price response in higher education: The student demand studies. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 58(2), 181-204.
- Light, I. (2005). Cultural Capital. *New dictionary of the history of ideas*. The Gale Group Inc. Retrieved from http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Cultural_capital.aspx
- Luna de la Rosa, M. (2006). Is opportunity knocking? Low-income students' perceptions of college and financial aid. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(12), 1670-1686.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Mexican American Legal Defense Fund. (2015, September 19). AB 540- Access to college for all. Retrieved from http://maldef.org/education/public_policy/ab540/
- McDonough, P. M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- McDonough, P. M. & Calderone, S. (2006). The meaning of money: Perceptual differences between college counselors and low-income families about college costs and financial aid. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(12), 1703-1718.
doi:10.1177/00002764206289140

- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.
- Myers, D., & Schirm, A. (1999). The impacts of Upward Bound: Final report for phase I of the national evaluation. Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
- Oakes, J. (2008). Keeping track: Structuring equality and inequality in an era of accountability. *Teachers College Record* 111(3), 700-712.
- Office of Government, Legislative and Community Relations. (2015, October 19). AB 540 Handbook. Retrieved from <http://web.csulb.edu/president/government-community/ab540/handbook/what.html>
- Oliva, M. (2008). Latino access to college: Actualizing the promise and potential of K-16 partnerships. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 7(2), 119-130. doi: 10.1177/1538192707313943
- Ortiz, M. E. (2011). Parental support for Latino traditional-age community college Students (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. UMI Number: 3486554.
- Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd Ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Pell Institute. (2005). Indicators of opportunity in higher education. Washington, D.C.: The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.
- Perez, P. A., & McDonough, P. M. (2008). Understanding Latina and Latino college choice: A social capital and chain migration analysis. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*. 7(3), 249-265.
- Perna, L. W. (2000). Racial and ethnic group differences in college enrollment decisions. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 107, 65-83.

- Perna, L. W. (2006). Understanding the relationship between information about college process and financial aid and students' college related behaviors. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(12), 1620-1635. doi: 10.1177/0002764206289144
- Perna, L. W., & Titus, M. A. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(5), 485-518.
- Pew Research Center. (2013). Mapping the Latino population by state, county, and city. Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trend Project. Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/08/latino_populations_in_the_states_counties_and_cities_FINAL.pdf
- Post, D. (1990). College going decisions by Chicanos: The politics of misinformation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12(2), 174-187.
- Powell, A. G. (1996). *Lessons from privilege*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- Rivas, M. A., Perez, J., Alvarez, C. R., & Solorzano, D. (2007). Latina/o transfer students understanding the critical role of the transfer process in California's postsecondary institutions. In C.S. R. Center (Ed.), (Vol. 9): University of California, Los Angeles.
- Solorzano, D. G. (1991). Mobility aspirations among racial minorities, controlling for SES. *Sociology and Social Research* 75, 218-225.
- Solorzano, D. G. (1992). An exploratory analysis of the effect of race, class, and gender on student and parent mobility aspirations. *Journal of Negro Education* 61, 30-44.
- Solorzano, D. G., Villalpando, O., & Oseguera, L. (2005). Educational inequities and Latina/o undergraduate students in the United States: A critical race analysis of their educational progress. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 4(3), 272, 294.

- St. John., E. P. (1990). Price response in enrollment decisions: An analysis of the high school and beyond sophomore cohort. *Research in Higher Education* 31(2), 161-176.
- St. John, E. P., Musoba, G. D., Simmons, A., Chung, C., Schmit, & Peng, J. C. (2004). Meeting the access challenge: An examination of Indiana's Twenty-first Century Scholars Program. *Research in Higher Education*, 45, (8), 829-871.
- St. John, E. P., Paulsen, M. B., & Carter, D. F. (2005). Diversity college costs, and postsecondary opportunity: An examination of the financial nexus between college choice and persistence for African Americans and Whites. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(5), 545-569.
- Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(1), 1-41.
- Strom, P.S. and Strom, R. D. (2005). Parent-child relationships in early adulthood: College students living at home. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 29, 517-529.
- Swail, W. S., & Perna, L. W. (2001). 2001 outreach program handbook. In E. P. Institute (Ed.). Washington, DC: The College Board.
- Tierney, W. G. (2002). Parents and families in precollege preparation: The lack of connection between research and practice. *Education Policy*, 16(588). doi: 10.1177/0895904802016004007
- Tierney, W. G., & Hagedorn, L. S. (2002). *Increasing access to college: Extending possibilities for all students*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Tierney, W. G., & Venegas, K. M. (2009). Finding money on the table: Information,

- financial aid, and access to college. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(4), 363-388.
doi: 10.1353/jhe.0059
- Tornatzky, L. G., Cutler, R., & Lee, J. (2002). College knowledge: What Latino parents need to know and why they don't know it: *The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute*. University of California, (2009). California Master Plan for Higher Education: Major features. Office of the President. Retrieved: 2014-06-20.
- UC Counselors Conference. (2015).
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). State and county quick facts: Compton, CA. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0615044.html>
- Vernez, G., Krop, R., & Rydell, C. P. (1999). *Closing the education gap: Benefits and costs*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Villalpando, O., & Solorzano, D. G. (2005). The role of culture in college preparation programs: A review of the research literature. In Tierney, W. G., Corwin, Z., and Colyar, J. E. (2005), *Preparing for college: Nine elements of effective outreach*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Yosso, T. (2006). *Critical race counterstories along the chicana/chicano educational pipeline*, New York, NY: Taylor Francis Group.
- Zarate, M. E., & Pachon, H. P. (2006). Perceptions of college financial aid among California Latino youth. In T.T. R. P. Institute (Ed.). Los Angeles: University of Southern California.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (1985). *Psychology and life*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.