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# **PARENTAL SUPPORT OF LATINOS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

by

MARIA LORENA MEZA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
University of San Diego

May 2011

Dissertation Committee

Robert Donmoyer, Ph.D, Chair  
Cheryl Getz, Ed.D, Member  
Patricia D. Quijada, Ph.D, Member

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## ABSTRACT

Many universities grapple with Latino student retention issues. Latinos are the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, yet they also are the group that has the least amount of formal education. The literature suggests that parental support helps Latinos succeed academically in elementary, middle, and high schools. However, there has been little research on how or even whether Latino parental support influences academic success at the postsecondary level. Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge about (a) Latino parental behavior and attitudes during the years their children attend college and (b) the relationship between parents' behavior and attitudes, on the one hand, and Latino college student academic achievement and retention, on the other.

This study provides information about the role parental support plays in promoting the academic success and retention of Latino students in higher education. Central to this study is qualitative analysis of Latino parent narratives which focus on how parents feel about their children attending college, the impact that college attendance has on their child and the family, and the support they provide their children as they navigate the academic environment. The study also gathered data about parental perceptions of how the University supports—or fails to support—their children while in school, and how these perceptions impacted parents' support efforts and strategies.

A case study/cross-case analysis design was used in the study. Parent participants were randomly selected from the parents of students who participate in the Educational Opportunity Program at a public four-year Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Findings suggest that Latino parents support their children in non-traditional ways. For example, they used, often quite consciously, public expressions of pride in

their children's accomplishments to demonstrate support and motivate their children; also promoted self-respect and respect for others as foundational, ingrained values that they believed helped their children navigate through the challenges of university life. Parents also indicated that, in contrast to their direct involvement with schools in the K-12 years, they found few opportunities to be involved with the University. Still, they trusted the university to provide the sort of help that their children required.

## DEDICATION

To Jesus Christ my personal Savior and Lord; I am grateful for your wisdom, knowledge, and love that led me in this path.

And, as always, to my husband, Fausto, whose love and support has sustained me through this educational journey.

For my son, daughter, and son-in-law, Fausto Jr., Arianna, and Jeremy, who have always been supporters of my work. My wish is that you, too, find your passion and satisfaction in your chosen professions.

To my granddaughters, Analiyah and Gabriella, and other grandchildren to come, I dedicate this work to you. As you navigate through life's beauty, challenges, and rewards, know that an education holds the key to your bright future.

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As I begin to think about the numerous folks who, knowingly or unknowably, became part of my process in this educational journey, there are too many to name in one page. Thus, I want acknowledge the individuals who directly shared happy moments and carried me through unexpected challenges. I want to thank my classmates, professors, and colleagues who gave a word of encouragement at key moments during my educational journey.

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To my Mom and Dad, thank you for giving me life, loving me, and always believing that I can do anything.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	x
LIST OF TABLES .....	xiv
CHAPTER	
1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....	1
Background of the Study .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of Study and Research Questions.....	4
Methodological Overview .....	5
Significance of the Study .....	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
Introduction.....	9
Literature Review of Parental Involvement Research .....	11
Benefits of Parental Involvement .....	12
Latino Parental Involvement (K-12) .....	13
Parental Support for Latino Students in the Pathway to College .....	13
Latino Parental Involvement in Higher Education .....	14
Barriers to Latino Parental Involvement.....	16
Educators’ Attitudes and Assumptions .....	17
Stereotypical Perceptions of Educators about Latino Parents .....	17
Parents’ Absence of Cultural Capital .....	18
Educators’ Disregard of Latino Parents’ Knowledge.....	20
Summary .....	21
Overview of Student Departure Literature and Its Applicability to Latinos.....	22
Limitation of Vincent Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure .....	23
Academic and Social Integration .....	24
Research Advancing Vincent Tinto’s Longitudinal Model of Student Departure .....	25
Research to Consider in Latino Student Departure.....	26
Student Involvement.....	26
Cognitive Development.....	27
Cultural Values .....	28

Student Development Theory.....	28
Validation Theory.....	30
Summary and Implications .....	31
3. METHODOLOGY .....	33
Methodological Overview .....	33
Data Collection Procedures.....	34
Selecting Participants .....	34
Procedures for Gaining Access and Attracting Volunteer Participants.....	34
Recruitment Process .....	35
Selection Process .....	36
Document Collection.....	38
Interview Procedures .....	39
Interview Approach.....	39
Post-Interview Process .....	40
Researcher's Process .....	40
Interview Follow-Up Process .....	42
Data Analysis .....	43
Document Analysis .....	45
Delimitations and Limitations.....	46
Delimitations .....	46
Limitations.....	46
Researcher's Perspective .....	46
4. THE FINDINGS .....	49
Review of the Study's Purpose and Research Questions.....	49
Participant Demographics.....	50
Parent Interviews .....	51
Maria (Mother of a Senior Female in College).....	52
Family Background.....	52
Children's College Attendance Impact on the Family.....	52
Maria's Perceptions of Support and Involvement .....	54
Maria's Perception of University Support for Parents and Their Children .....	55
Lucy (Mother of a Junior Male in College) .....	56
Family Background.....	56
Children's College Attendance Impact on the Family.....	57
Lucy's Perceptions of Support and Involvement.....	57
Lucy's Perception of University Support for Parents and Their Children .....	58
Andres (Stepfather of a Sophomore Female in College) .....	59

Family Background.....	59
Children's College Attendance Impact on the Family.....	59
Andres's Perceptions of Support and Involvement .....	60
Andres's Perception of University Support for Parents and Their Children .....	61
Luis (Father of a Freshman Male in College) .....	62
Family Background.....	62
Children's College Attendance Impact on the Family.....	62
Luis's Perceptions of Support and Involvement.....	62
Luis's Perception of University Support for Parents and Their Children .....	63
Rosa (Mother of a Freshman in College; Married to Luis) .....	63
Family Background.....	63
Children's College Attendance Impact on the Family.....	64
Rosa's Perceptions of Support and Involvement.....	64
Rosa's Perception of University Support for Parents and Their Children .....	65
Hector (Father of a Male Current Summer Bridge Student) .....	66
Family Background.....	66
Children's College Attendance Impact on the Family.....	66
Hector's Perceptions of Support and Involvement .....	67
Hector's Perception of University Support for Parents and Their Children .....	68
Marichu (Mother of a Male Current Summer Bridge Student; Married to Hector) .....	68
Family Background.....	68
Children's College Attendance Impact on the Family.....	68
Marichu's Perceptions of Support and Involvement .....	69
Marichu's Perception of University Support for Parents and Their Children .....	69
Cross-Case Analysis Findings .....	70
Parents' Description of the Support They Provide for Their Children.....	72
Parents' Description of the Ways the University Supports Their Children.....	73
Parents' Description of the Way the University Supports Them.....	74
The Silent Experience .....	74
Parent Levels of Support for Their Children by Academic Year .....	75
Triangulation from the Analysis of Institutional Documents .....	76
Summary of Cross-Case Analysis Findings .....	77

5. DISCUSSION .....	79
Overview of Purpose of the Study and Research Questions .....	79
Summary of Methods Used in the Study .....	80
Summary of Study Findings .....	81
Interpretation of Findings .....	82
This Study's Results: Linking Validation Theory to Promoting Student Success in College.....	82
A Comparison of This Study's Results with Findings about Parental Support during the K-12 Years .....	84
Interpersonal Validation: Parental Interest and Pride in Their Children's Education.....	85
Validation of Self-Respect and Respect for Others .....	87
Parental Perceptions of Institutional Support for Them .....	89
Implications for Policy Makers and Practitioners.....	90
Reinforcing Respect throughout the Educational Journey.....	94
Addressing the Parents' Silent Higher Education Experience .....	94
Implications for Future Research.....	96
Conclusion .....	98
REFERENCES .....	100
Appendix	
A. Letter Granting Access .....	114
B. Invitation to Participate.....	116
C. Interview Guide .....	119
D. Letter to Parents (Volunteered, but Not Selected) .....	122

## List of Tables

Table 1. Sample Selection by Gender of Both Parents and Students .....	38
Table 2. Example Starting Point for Sorting Data .....	43
Table. 3. Students' Different Enrollment Periods.....	45
Table 4. Parent Demographics.....	50
Table 5. Proposed Parent Institute Summer Schedule .....	93

## CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### Background of the Study

Approximately 25% of all undergraduates depart institutions of higher education in their first year (ACT Institutional Data File, 2009). The problem is even more acute for members of most minority groups. In fact, Valencia (2002) characterized the growing disparity in educational achievement between historically underserved student populations and their White counterparts as “persistent, pervasive, and disproportionate” (p. 4), and indicated that this disparity manifested itself most clearly in minority students’ lower standardized test scores, lower college enrollment, and lower college retention than their White counterparts.

College enrollment data for Latinos<sup>1</sup> compellingly illuminates the disparity. The Latino population has grown dramatically, yet this population exhibits the lowest formal educational attainment of any ethnic group (Pew Hispanic Center Report, 2009). For example, from 2000 to 2009 the Hispanic population grew by 37.3% while the U.S. population as a whole grew by only 9.1% (Pew Hispanic Center Report, 2009). Only 27.5% of Latinos between the ages of 18 to 24 in the United States were enrolled in postsecondary institutions in 2009, compared to 45% of Whites (Radford & Berkner, 2010). Kohler and Lazarin (2007, for example, noted that the enrollment rate for Blacks was somewhat higher than for Latinos (31.8% versus 24.7%), but still almost 10% lower than the 41.7% enrollment rate for Whites.

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” refer to individuals who self-identified as being of Latino, Mexican, or Central-American descent. The terms will be used interchangeably and will also be used to refer to both male and female.

The retention data for students of color who managed to enroll in college were similar. Approximately six of every 10 students of color who entered a four-year college or university failed to earn a bachelor's degree within six years (Museus, 2007). The six-year graduation rates of students of color in four-year institutions for freshmen cohorts entering the 2003-04 academic year, for example, were 34.8% for African-American and 36.1% for Latinos, as opposed to 54.8% for Whites (Radford & Berkner, 2010). These discrepancies in academic success (and subsequent economic advancement) were magnified when viewed in the context of the smaller percentage of students of color who enrolled in college in the first place.

The statistical evidence highlights the challenges that college officials from four-year institutions face when trying to retain students of color. Inadequate information compounds the issue of how to correct and erase the discrepancy which currently exists between students of color and White students who managed, at least, to enter college.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Latinos are less likely than their White counterparts to obtain a bachelor's degree (Kohler and Lazarin, 2007). College officials have recognized a number of factors which contribute to the attrition of students of color and, in particular, Latinos. The list of identified and contributing factors include: limited or no financial aid; a lack of student involvement; a family background which may be culturally enriched yet lacks the cultural capital<sup>2</sup> to assist their son/daughter to navigate through college successfully; inadequate academic preparation prior to college; low self-esteem; concerns about one's identity on a

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<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) described cultural capital as an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups.

college campus; and a lack of interaction with faculty and staff (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). There was limited research, however, about one potentially important factor which could influence retention: parental support. Parental support may be an especially important factor for students who came from tight-knit families. Campus officials could not fully address the needs of Latino students without understanding whether parental support influenced retention, and how colleges and universities might support parents as they attempted to support their children.

Interestingly, there is an abundance of literature which illuminates the important role parental support plays in supporting Latino academic success in the kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) educational arena (Baharudin & Luster, 1998; Chang, Park, Singh, & Sung, 2009; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). Collectively, this literature suggests parental involvement as a key component of Latinos' academic success during the elementary, middle, and high-school years (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Because of the limited research on parental support of Latinos in higher education, insufficient knowledge exists about whether or not parental support during the higher-education experience enhances student achievement and contributes to the retention of Latino students. Knowing the effectiveness of this key component for the early education years, we can focus on a variable which we already know has significant impact. Thus, we can research the degree to which Latino parental support influences academic success at the postsecondary level among 18- to 24-year-old undergraduates to capitalize on prior research and extend our understanding of the usefulness of parental support variables within higher education.



There is a dearth of studies on parental involvement from the parents' perspective. The few studies which had been conducted regarding parental support for Latinos in higher education gauged parental support, but only from the student's perspective (Ceballo, 2004); other studies conducted on Latino parental involvement focused on support in the pathway to college (Heredia, 2009). Therefore, a need exists to identify the degree to which parental supportive factors may have played a role in the retention of Latino students in higher education. A better understanding of parental support for Latinos in higher education might provide important insights into what college and university officials can do to support Latino students throughout their higher educational experience and retain them to graduation.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to expand the research and provide useful information centering on the role parental support plays in the retention of Latino students in higher education. Central to this study is the qualitative analysis of Latino parent narratives, which focused on how they felt about their children attending college, the impact that college attendance had on both children and family, and the support—or lack of support—they provided their children as they navigated the academic environment. Furthermore, the study gathered data concerning how parental perceptions of how universities supported—or failed to support—their children academically, socially, and emotionally while they attended higher education and how these perceptions impacted the parents' own support efforts and strategies for their children. The following overarching research questions guided this study:

1. How do Latino parents describe the support they are providing to their son/daughter in higher education?
2. How do Latino parents describe the ways in which the University supports and does not support their son/daughter while attending higher education?
3. What do Latino parents say the institution does or does not do in supporting them while their son/daughter attends higher education?

### **Methodological Overview**

This study used qualitative methodology to answer the research questions listed above and employed a case study/cross-case analysis design. Merriam (2002) described a case study as an in-depth exploration of a social unit (i.e., a “bounded system”). The bounded system is a public four-year institution and, more specifically, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Summer Bridge Program established at a four-year public institution. While the institution was selected in part as a matter of convenience, this institution was ideal because of its recent designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)<sup>3</sup>, as well as for the programs which were in place to serve this population. The study examined the experiences of a number of parents of students who participated in the EOP’s Summer Bridge Program and maintained continuous enrollment at the University.

This study utilized interviewing as the primary data collection method. Patton (2002) described various methods to conduct interviews and proposed that these methods be employed, depending on the preference of the researcher and type of research

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<sup>3</sup>Hispanic-Serving Institutions are eligible for the federal government’s designation when they have achieved a 25% undergraduate enrollment of Hispanic students.

conducted. Qualitative interviews with seven purposefully selected parents of participants in the EOP's Summer Bridge Program were conducted and served as the primary source of data. The researcher conducted the interviews in Spanish and also established follow-up to allow participants the opportunity to review their transcripts.

The researcher used the interview guide approach. The interview guide approach utilizes a series of topics or questions to be raised by the interviewer, but not necessarily in the same way across interviews or in precisely the same order. The interview guide approach provides some degree of standardization and insures that important topics get addressed by the participants; the approach, however, also provided flexibility and permitted the researcher to explore unanticipated topics when they arose during the course of an interview (Patton, 2002).

Data analysis was conducted by using the analysis of narrative approach. Polkinghorne (1988) described two different approaches to data analysis which he labeled "narrative analysis" and the "analysis of narrative." Narrative analysis entails arranging qualitative data into a story form, while the analysis of narrative entails coding the story into themes, categories, and subcategories. An emergent coding process took place in which categories established after an initial review of the data were refined through subsequent reviews. In other words, the data analysis process for this study consisted of sorting, categorizing, and identifying qualitative themes which emerged from the parent interviews. Themes emerged from topics which seemed salient to the parents. These themes cut across a number of broad categories and subcategories.

The researcher also implemented triangulation when comparing and contrasting the data across cases. Mathison (1988) described the importance of triangulation and

how triangulation enhances the validity of the research findings. Triangulation compares the data—in this case data about the experience of each parent—from different perspectives. For this study, the perspectives of five different university periods—the initial college experience (Summer Bridge), freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years—were analyzed. Parent data was also triangulated with the results of document analysis of EOP's Summer Bridge Program. The expanded version of the methodology will be discussed in Chapter Three of the dissertation.

### **Significance of the Study**

It is no longer a forecast; it is now a fact that the Latinos are the largest of all the ethnic groups in the United States, and yet the least formally educated (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). This compelling evidence prompts researchers to better understand these students and how they could best be supported in their educational experience. While parental involvement has been documented to contribute positively to student achievement in K-12 for various ethnic groups including Latinos (Jeynes, 2003), little is known about parental involvement of Latinos in higher education and its potential influence on retention.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of parental involvement of Latinos in higher education in relation to student support. This study reveals important factors in better understanding Latino parental support and informs campus officials in creating and identifying best practices for Latino students that will both retain them in college and support them to graduation. This study also yields important data about EOP's Summer Bridge programmatic interventions which can inform the future development of this program and for similar programs at similar

institutions. In addition, this study may be of potential benefit to institutions seeking the HSI federal designation and for HSIs that want to preserve this designation. Finally, this study contributes to the limited body of knowledge regarding Latino parental support in higher education and contributes to the on-going conversations regarding the applicability of Vincent Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure (1993) and limitations to minority populations as advanced by research. I will discuss this limitation more in detail in the next section and more specifically in the context of its applicability to Latinos.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

Two bodies of literature were reviewed to begin this research: parental involvement and student departure. The literature reviewed is organized in four parts. First, a review of the research regarding parental involvement and its relation to student achievement was conducted as a contextual framework for understanding parental involvement in general. Second, a review of the literature that centered on the involvement of Latino parents who had children in K-12 and their respective documented barriers to Latino parental involvement. Third, a review of research regarding retention of Latino students in higher education, specifically through the framework of Vincent Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure and its applicability to Latino students as well as other literature to consider in Latino student retention. Finally, the conclusion proposes a further exploration of parental support for Latinos in higher education as a potential factor in retention.

To begin this review, however, it is important to discuss the growth and educational status of the Latino population. The Latino population has grown dramatically over the past few decades, and yet has the lowest formal educational attainment (Pew Hispanic Center Report, 2009). For example, from 2000 to 2009 the Hispanic population grew by 37.3% while the U.S. population as a whole grew by only 9.1% (National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Only 27.5% of Latinos between the ages of 18 to 24 in the United States were enrolled in postsecondary institutions in 2009, compared to 45% of Whites (National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

For students who persisted through the K-12 educational pipeline, studies supported the belief that parental involvement had a significant positive impact across various student populations (Garcia-Ramos, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Moll & Ruiz, 2002), yet which aspects of parental involvement helped students' K-12 education and which of these components of parental involvement had greater impact remained fertile ground for research (Jeynes, 2005). One study revealed that parental support and encouragement had an impact on educational goal commitments for minorities in higher education (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). However, Latinos who successfully transitioned into college, many still left at the end of, or even during, their first year. For example, the U.S. Department of Education (2007) reported that 28.3% of Hispanics left in their first year and did not enroll in any other institution.

College officials recognize a number of factors which contribute to the attrition of students of color, in general, and Latinos, in particular. The list includes limited or no financial aid; a lack of student involvement; inadequate academic preparation prior to college; low self-esteem; concerns about one's identity; limited interaction with faculty and staff; and a family background which may be enriched culturally, yet lacks the cultural capital to assist their son/daughter to navigate through college successfully (Tinto, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

While family background is a known factor impacting attrition of students of color, minimal knowledge is known on the specific dimensions that family impact has on the process of higher education. According to Nora, Barlow, & Crisp (2006), "little is known in the persistence literature on Hispanic student retention at the end of the critical first year in college and in subsequent years" (p. 55). Without an understanding of how

the parental supportive or non-supportive factors influence retention in college, campus officials cannot fully address the needs of Latino students.

### **Literature Review of Parental Involvement Research**

Vast amounts of literature exists regarding parental support and involvement factors which contributes to student retention and achievement from K-12 contexts (Baharudin & Luster, 1998; Bohon, Macpherson & Atilas, 2005; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). For instance, parental activities associated with increased student achievement include attending school functions, helping children with homework, providing verbal encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modeling desired behavior, monitoring homework, and actively tutoring children at home (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005).

Researchers in the K-12 domain, in addition to documenting the various ways parents became involved in their children's education, also developed models of how parental involvement impacted achievement (Epstein, 1987, 1995; Gordon, 1979; Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986; Hornby, 2000; Swap, 1993). Some variation exist in the models, but all models recognize that "parent involvement is a multidimensional construct and encompasses a variety of roles and responsibilities" (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001, p. 121). These models articulated a variety of behaviors engaged by families, schools, and communities, and they defined the diverse ways parents involved themselves in their children's education. Research documented the benefits of parental involvement not only to a child's education, but also for educators and the community.



## **Benefits of Parental Involvement**

Parents have major influence over their children. They nurture, transmit values and culture, foster socialization, and, generally, seek the best for their children. The literature also documents the impact parents have in their children's education—resulting in improved grades and attendance—when they ensured homework completion, positive attitudes about education, and appropriate behavior in school. All of this adds up to higher graduation rates and greater enrollment in higher education (Henderson & Berla, 1995).

Indeed, the literature was quite clear about one point: Students flourished academically when parents became actively involved in their children's education and schools had an opportunity to build upon the school/family partnership. Overall, parental involvement translates into better attendance, improved behavior, a higher quality of education, and a safer and more disciplined environment (Drake, 2000).

When parents and children interact, parents reinforce academic success by stressing the importance of doing well in school. Parents also persuade their children to engage in behaviors and to make efforts which lead to overall success. Children of involved parents tend to develop positive self-efficacy for school-related tasks compared to students whose parents do not provide these reinforcements (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). For instance, Henderson and Berla (1995) discovered strong correlations between certain behaviors of families and high-achieving students. These behaviors included establishing a daily routine, providing time and a quiet place to study, assigning household chores, establishing strict bed and eating times, limiting time watching television, monitoring out-of-school activities, supporting special talents, celebrating

successes, and communicating regularly with teachers. Researchers not only documented and highlighted the benefits of parental involvement, but also documented parental involvement from populations of color as particularly effective.

### **Latino Parental Involvement (K-12)**

Research about parental support and involvement suggests that parental involvement from elementary through high school yields improvements in student achievement regardless of a family's race, culture, and socioeconomic status (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Jeynes, 2003). For instance, Jeynes (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 20 studies examining the relationship between minority parental involvement and academic achievement in grades K-12 and found parental involvement, in general, had a positive effect on the academic achievement of all minority groups. Among other things, these studies illuminated the high value Latinos place on education (Kerbow & Bernhardt, 1993); unfortunately, the studies also suggested that schools do not always understand how to build upon relationships with Latino parents (Moles, 1993; Valadez, 1996). Nevertheless, the involvement of Latino parents was documented as effective from K-12 and onto the entrance to college.

### **Parental Support for Latino Students in the Pathway to College**

Some studies have identified the multiple ways in which parental support for Latino students was effective in keeping the students on their pathway to college. For example, studies conducted through a university outreach program revealed that Latino parental involvement contributed to students reaching college entrance successfully (Auerbach, 2006; Heredia, 2009). Other researchers studied a group of Latino parents helping other Latino parents understand the intricacies of college (Chrispeels & Rivero,

2001). The results of this study revealed that parents took initiative and volunteered to learn about the college application process, financial aid, and testing required prior to college. The study further revealed that, after the six-week training, not only were the parents willing to teach other parents about the college entrance process, but also that the children of these parents transitioned into college successfully. In short, the Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) study suggested that when Latino parents learned the rules of the college entrance game, they were able to help their children negotiate the college admissions process.

### **Latino Parental Involvement in Higher Education**

While various studies suggest that parental involvement for Latino students in the college admissions process yields student success in pursuing a higher education, only a limited number of studies focus on parental involvement during the transition from high school into college and during other parts of a student's college years. Interestingly, some of the studies focus on family rather than simply parental involvement, and they defined "family" broadly, i.e., as an evolving system which includes grandparents, other relatives, and non-blood guardians.

The few studies that examined family impact in the transition to higher education and the higher education years repeated the positive story of the literature on parental involvement during the elementary and secondary years. For example, Horn and Chen (1998) identified family support as an important factor in decreasing the high school drop-out rate and improving the grades and enrollment of disadvantaged students in higher education.

Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) focused on Latinos' transition from high school to college and concluded that family involvement helps first-year Latino students adjust to college. Hernandez (2000) took a somewhat longer view and found that family involvement impacted Latino student retention and graduation. Hernandez noted, "without exceptions all of the participants [in the study] discussed in no uncertain terms the important role that their family had on retention" (p. 579). In this study, Hernandez interviewed 10 Latinos (five males and five females) from a predominantly White campus. While this study revealed that family impacted students' decisions to stay in college, it neglected to describe the ways in which parental support played a role in retention. Collectively, these studies suggest that family involvement is a critical factor in student achievement for Latino students. However, not many findings have noted specifically how Latino parental involvement influenced retention during the college experience.

One problem with the few existing studies of the impact of parental support on Latinos in higher education was that most of the studies gauged parental support from the student's perspective and inferred ways parents supported the educational process and the thinking behind parent's actions. In one study, low-income, high-achieving Latino students attending an Ivy League school shared their experiences in college and how they perceived their parents supported them (Ceballo, 2004). The evidence was not entirely positive. Students noted parents' lack of knowledge of the educational system and suggested that this lack of knowledge was a barrier to their parents helping them negotiate the higher education environment. But what was arguably the most interesting about this and similar studies were the researchers' decision not to include parents among

the research participants. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the study's discussion of parental involvement, even when positive, was rather generic and provided limited insight into what specific actions parents took to support their children as they negotiated what, for many, was the strange new world of academia.

Despite their flaws, however, the limited number of studies about parental involvement in their children's lives and education at the higher education level are important, if only because they suggested that support—in whatever form it takes—seemed to be important in helping children from families of color, including Latino families, to be successful. However, because virtually all of the studies (including the studies which focused specifically on Latino families) failed to look at parental involvement from the perspectives of the parents, the resultant perspective on the issue is limited and generic rather than concrete and specific. In short, insufficient information exists to determine how parental support throughout the higher education experience impacts student achievement or contributed to the retention/persistence of Latino students. Latino parental involvement research, in an admittedly general way, documented a positive relationship between parental involvement and student achievement. Although the current understanding of what Latino parents did—and could have done—to support their children in college is well-documented, there was compelling literature on the barriers which currently exists to making any parental involvement effective.

### **Barriers to Latino Parental Involvement**

The deficit perspective suggests that fault and responsibility lie with Latino parents rather than the school, and that the role of the school was to change the ways

parents interacted with the school. Thus many educators assumed that the lack of parental participation was evidence of parents' lack of interest in their children's education. Research identified these deficit perspectives and documented them as barriers to Latino parental involvement which included educators' attitudes and assumptions, stereotypes of Latino parents, parents' absence of cultural capital, and educator's disregard of Latino parents' cultural knowledge (Arzubiaga, Ceja, & Artiles, 2000; Brilliant 2001; Daniel-White 2002; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 1994; Moll, Amanti, Nett, & Gonzalez, 1992; Ortiz, 2004; Valencia & Black 2002; Yosso, 2005).

### **Educators' Attitudes and Assumptions**

One barrier entailed the reluctance of educators to pay attention to feedback from parents, even when parents attempted to provide feedback about how schools could better help their child succeed. According to Yosso (2005), "Educators most often assume that schools work and that student, parents, and community need to change to conform to this already effective and equitable system" (p. 75).

The failure to attend to parents' perspective is especially vital for Latinos. Some educators simply assume that Latino families do not value education, do not care to participate in school activities, or do not support school activities and programs the school offers for students and parents (Brilliant 2001; Daniel-White 2002; Valencia & Black 2002; Yosso, 2005). This attitude suggests a second, closely related barrier to parental involvement: stereotyping.

### **Stereotypical Perceptions of Educators about Latino Parents**

Another study, in fact, found that schools tended to reinforce stereotypes about Latinos that devalued and undermined their participation in school (Arzubiaga, Ceja, &

Artiles, 2000). This distorted image of parental deficiency could have prevented parents from even attempting to access resources and from supporting their children in their education in other ways.

While some research documented poverty, low-educational attainment, and immigration as social factors which affected the participation of Latino parents in schools, it neglected to document the negative stereotypes which might begin in the minds of school officials but also took the form of structural barriers found in schools (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 1994; Ortiz, 2004; Valencia & Black, 2002). For instance, Martinez, DeGarmo, and Eddy (2004) noted stereotypes about Latinos stemmed from the lack of cultural competency among some school officials, which eventually created cultural barriers. Another study noted that, while Latino parents had high educational expectations for their children, they did not get involved because they did not have positive experiences with the school (Moreno, 2004). Other studies suggest that the absence of cultural capital in Latino parents was another barrier to helping their children navigate the educational experience.

### **Parents' Absence of Cultural Capital**

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) described cultural capital as an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups. Parents, especially those who have not attended college, also may lack the significant knowledge required to be effective in educational institutions, especially higher education institutions. This lack of knowledge is sometimes referred to as an “absence of cultural capital.” A component of cultural capital is knowledge about how things work and how to make things work to your benefit.

Studies documented that parents with access to cultural capital were more likely to be involved in their child's education (Sheldon, 2002). Thus, families who possessed the kind of cultural capital for the typical four-year public institution already knew the rules and how to navigate successfully through the educational system, but parents without cultural capital became significantly disadvantaged (Payne, 1996; Tierney, 2002). Parents wanted their children to succeed in school, but they did not understand the educational system, how to assist with it, or what constituted readiness for school.

According to Daniel-White (2002), one form of parental involvement during the elementary school years included parents staying informed about school policies and raising questions about any policies which appear to be hurting their children. This component of parental involvement may have overlooked the need for systemic knowledge about how the educational system operated and how to influence the system's operation (Daniel-White, 2002). If anything, this sort of knowledge was even more important at the higher education level, but it probably was more likely Latino parents and other minorities—especially parents who did not, themselves, go to college—may not have been privy to this sort of requisite knowledge.

In the absence of such knowledge, it is likely that the culture will simply reproduce itself and that the children of those who are at the top of the cultural hierarchy will be, themselves, also at the apex. For example, as evidenced by the new phenomenon coming into institutions of higher learning known as helicopter parents<sup>4</sup>, these parents tend to come from the middle- to high-income socio-economic status, and most of these

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<sup>4</sup> Helicopter parents are defined by the higher education community as middle-income to high-income parents that are heavily involved in their children's educational process (White, 2005).



parents have had a formal education and, therefore, have an understanding of the educational system. They use this knowledge to their and their children's benefits to demand services and care for their children (Payne, 1996; Tierney, 2002). Thus, as long as the dominant middle-class society and its norms and values are embraced and institutionalized by colleges and universities and these institutions exclude other cultural values, other parents will be ineffective in influencing institutional policies. This lack of influence is problematic because it will lead to the continuation of policies which benefit mainstream groups and disadvantage underrepresented groups. It also is likely to reinforce educators' assumptions that Latino parents are not interested in having their children be successful in college because the parents' participation differs from the manner which educators expect.

### **Educators' Disregard of Latino Parents' Knowledge**

Yosso (2005) challenged the traditional interpretation of cultural capital and noted that communities of color bring a wealth of cultural knowledge which often goes unrecognized in the schools. Tramonte and Willms (2009) further defined cultural capital as having two strands: static and relational. Static referred to the social status of the parents who attended higher-end type activities such as the opera or theater, and focused on the parents' lifestyle. Relational refers to parents who interacted with their children by discussing a book, play, or poetry, and referred more to parents who transmitted cultural capital to their children.

In their study, which was broad and overarching in an attempt to explain variability in national patterns of the influence of family cultural resources on school achievement, they specifically set out to determine whether cultural capital was

associated with students' reading literacy, sense of belonging at school, and occupational aspirations. Their study's sample consisted of 28 countries using data from 2000 *Programme for International Student Assessment*. This study revealed that the relational strand was higher than static, suggesting that in many communities (depending on socio-economic status), cultural capital exists, but not in the form which may have currency in schools. In other words, the lack of acknowledgement of the cultural knowledge noted by Yosso (2005) held by communities of color is not necessarily valued or acknowledged in schools and only serves to widen the gap of Latino parental involvement.

### **Summary**

Deficit thinking represented a significant barrier to the participation of people of color in their children's education (Valencia & Black, 2002). Educators tend to assume that their way of doing things is the right way of doing things. They also could have erroneously assumed, at times, that Latino parents were apathetic, unconcerned, or problematic for a variety of other reasons. Educators realize the importance of parental involvement to the success of students in general. However, school teachers also faced challenges in identifying all of the barriers in parental involvement which required measures to eliminate them (Jesse, 1995). Ferrara and Ferrara (2005) also noted limited teacher preparation programs regarding how to engage parents in the school.

In at least one respect, the assumption that Latino parents lacked systemic knowledge of schools was partially correct because some researchers have suggested that, because of cultural hegemony, some parents may have an absence of cultural capital. Latino parents need to learn the rules of education so they could play the game and demonstrate their concern, and eventually impact change so their children can have a

better chance of reaching their educational dream. At the moment, however, their limited cultural capital is a barrier to effective parental involvement.

Collectively, the research reviewed in this section suggests that deficit thinking operates in a variety of ways to inhibit parents from supporting their children in education. Thus, communication and the cultural gap between the parent and school remain obstacles in Latino parental involvement.

### **Overview of Student Departure Literature and Its Applicability to Latinos**

Approximately 25% of undergraduate students enrolled at four-year institutions dropped out in their first year of college (ACT Institutional Data File, 2009). Not surprisingly, college officials give attention to higher education's attrition<sup>5</sup> problem in students' first year (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), especially in recent years due to increased enrollment, tight budgets, and calls for accountability from accreditation agencies which have created new challenges for institutions of higher learning. On the one hand, an institution's rate of retention<sup>6</sup> indicates institutional success. On the other hand, high attrition rates reflects poorly on an institution's capacity to meet the needs of its students (Engle & O'Brien, 2007). Not surprisingly, "many institutions work hard to retain students, using strategies that generally hinge around the first-year experience" (Swail, 2004, p. 5).

College officials have had some ideas for the reasons behind early college departure of first-year students, but they continue to grapple with strategic intervention plans to minimize this critical institutional problem. In this complex research

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<sup>5</sup> The higher education community defines "attrition" as students departing the college before graduation for various complex reasons (Engle & O'Brien, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> The higher education community defines "retention" as the proportion of students who remain enrolled (Engle & O'Brien, 2007).

phenomenon on attrition, theorists have developed models to assist college officials' understanding of the reasons for students' early college departure. For instance, some theorists have identified typical factors which impact attrition in general. Tinto (1975, 1987, 1993), along with Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), identified common factors which contribute to attrition. They included lack of student involvement, characteristics of the student, family background, lack of academic preparation, lack of self-esteem, issues of identity, and lack of faculty and staff interactions.

Vincent Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure (1975, 1987, & 1993) has been one of the most widely used models by practitioners in higher education. In attempts to better understand student departure in higher education, researchers have continued to advance Tinto's work in respect to its applicability to minority populations. An overview of the documented research on the limitations of Tinto's Model is presented in the next section (in the context of its applicability to Latinos in higher education).

### **Limitation of Vincent Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure**

Tinto (1975, 1987, & 1993) considered family background as a relevant factor in students' transition into the college environment. Tinto created a model to explain the phenomena of student departure from institutions of higher learning. The background characteristics which Tinto described are students' initial goal and commitment to the institution, academic and social integration, intention to persist, subsequent goal, institutional commitments, and students' withdrawal decisions. According to Tinto, students entered the college environment with various personal, family, and academic characteristics and skills which also included the students' intentions and commitments regarding personal goals and school attendance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Therefore, values, academic experiences, and intentions served as the basis for students' institutional goals and commitments when students entered the college environment.

Tinto's model noted that students entered two types of experiences in the college environment and upon matriculation: academic and social.

### **Academic and Social Integration**

Academic integration was viewed by Tinto as following the academic norms of the institution (e.g., grades, personal development, and intellectual development). Social integration was defined by Tinto as a match between students and their social environment (e.g., being part of a student organization and interaction with peers, faculty, and staff). Therefore, Tinto asserted, in order for students of color to remain in college, they must separate themselves from their communities of the past and take the responsibility to become incorporated in the college's academic and social system. Tinto defined external commitments/community as family, friends, and pre-college involvements and organizations. Specifically, he argued against the external commitments of students as a detractor in retention of students.

Researchers challenged the applicability of Tinto's separation of prior community for minority students (Berger & Milem, 1999; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, Carter & Supler, 1996). Tinto's belief regarding this separation for all students became the limitation of his theory of student departure and has been extensively re-examined for applicability to minority student populations. Most theorists agreed about the need to further research attrition to account for multiple variances in the students' experience within many subcategories of minority groups (Braxton, Sullivan, &

Johnson, 1997; Rendón, Jalomo & Nora, 2000). Most attrition research has moved in this direction.

### **Research Advancing Vincent Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Student Departure**

Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson (1997) assessed the inconsistencies of Tinto's theory and proposed revisions because of its limited applicability to students of color and other subcategories of students groups. Their assessment led to the creation of an edited volume titled, *Reworking the Student Departure Puzzle*. In this volume, several researchers proposed theoretical approaches in revising Tinto's theory, and they offered new directions in understanding early departure of students of color.

One researcher noted that the current system in the United States assumes that once children reach the age of 18, they become independent and are treated as adults. According to Wright (1987), this system gives no relevance or validation to the collective groups and family. Thus, Tinto based his model on the assumption that children must become independent to be part of the institutional culture and to stay in college (Wright, 1987). For instance, in his work titled, *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, Tinto (1993) referred to the process of "breaking away" that first-generation college students experience from a study conducted by London (1989) to acknowledge that separation from the past "remains somewhat isolating, stressful, and disorienting to all students including first-generation college students" (p. 96). This separation process, according to Tinto, potentially led to students leaving school, and this potential for dropping out threatened all students—not just first-generation college students. However, Tinto overlooked that the emotional stress of separating from families has been normalized for the typical White student to separate from the family at

the age of 18. The Latino culture, on the other hand, expects children to live at home beyond the age of 18 and, in some cases, until marriage. Latino students were taught values by parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, caretakers, and mentors that take family into consideration as a source of strength to navigate through life's difficulties. Therefore, it seems important to keep in mind that Latinos favor family support (Bennett & Okinaka, 1990), and not always embrace leaving home at the age of 18.

Another limitation documented by research advancing Tinto's model is not considering the minority students' ability to operate in multiple contexts (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2004; Tierney, 1999). For instance, this limitation in Tinto's model applied to Latinos navigating between two cultures. Many students believed negotiating bilingualism and two languages was important for their cultural values. Many students speak English while in school and with friends, and speak Spanish when at home with family members and/or at functions to follow cultural and linguistic traditions. These studies supported the notion that, for Latino students, family and community may serve to strengthen their retention and prompted researchers to consider these variances of student experiences in retention.

### **Research to Consider in Latino Student Departure**

#### **Student Involvement**

Other researchers studied student involvement to identify the longitudinal effects of college, which also presented challenges when applying this theory to Latinos. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) made comparisons on the similarities of Tinto's (1993) theory of integration and Astin's Student Involvement Theory (2009) and their full applicability for minority students, and found limitations. For instance, Astin's (2009)

Student Involvement Theory posited that students learn by becoming involved, but critics have identified problems when applying Astin's theory to non-traditional students who found it difficult to get involved (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A sub-group of Latinos from low-income backgrounds, for instance, may not have gotten involved because they faced socio-economic issues such as struggling to pay for food and transportation. They may also have had the burden of financially contributing to the family's household by working longer hours while attending school (Engle & O'Brien, 2007).

### **Cognitive Development**

Other studies have focused on studying students' cognitive development and have suggested that students learn outside the college campus. For instance, a 20-year study conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) researched how college affected students and estimated that about 50% or more of the gains made in abstract reasoning, critical thinking, and the ability to conceptualize complexity occur during the freshman and sophomore years of college. They also noted that "only a portion of these gains can be attributed to the influence of college," and further noted that "non-college experiences might exert significant impact on individual's intellectual growth" (pp.155, 156). This research supported some of Tinto's critics (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tierney, 1999), who claimed that external interactions such as family and community played an important role in the integration of academic life and cognitive development for students of color. These studies suggested that Latinos may benefit from their family connections while in college.



## **Cultural Values**

Some researchers have confirmed that attrition was impacted when a student experienced a conflict in cultural values. They found that students of color may have left college when conflicts surfaced between their ethnic values and those in the academic environment (Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2004). Thus, when Latino students had to negotiate between their values of family and community and those in academic environments which promote competition and individualism, they found themselves, as students, in direct conflict with Latino values of community and collective approach to succeeding.

## **Student Development Theory**

Various theories on student development informed student affairs practitioners of the complexity of student development. These theories helped student affairs professionals to understand students' moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969, 1976), intellectual development (Perry, 1968), and student development while facing issues in college (Chickering, 1969). In virtually all cases, the theories suggest that student development as a sequential stage-based processes; the claim was that a student moved through each stage sequentially and, in the process, built on prior understanding to develop increasingly greater levels of sophistication. These stage-oriented student development theories provided theoretical frameworks for student affairs practitioners when working with students at various stages of development (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010).

In the field of student affairs, however, one cannot talk about student development theories without taking into consideration the identity development of the

student, as student and identity development are interrelated. Identity development theorists, for instance, suggest that the development of ethnic identity also develops in stages and has a profound impact on other forms of development. Cross (1991), for example, laid the foundation for understanding identity development in African-American students, suggesting, in the process, that their identity development mirrored identity development in other ethnic minority cultures, in part because the identity development of African-Americans and the identity development of members of other ethnic groups occurred sequentially in stages (Cross, 1991).

More recently, the notion of a single identity development model which explained one's social identity development came into question. To better understand the complex identity development process, Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) explored the multiple dimensions of identity development and, in the process, challenged the idea that identity development was a relatively linear, sequential process. They described the multiple dimensions of identity as a mix of experiences of the student arriving from different directions which takes into consideration self-perceptions such as race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, and religion. A meaning-making filter sifted through different degrees of experience depending on contextual influences such as family, norms, stereotypes, and socio-political conditions. In other words, identity development was not sequential according to Jones and McEwen; rather, the process was multi-pronged, multi-dimensional, and multi-directional, always evolving, built on experiences, and self-acceptance.

Another example of an identity development model that is less hierarchical and more fluid is Vasti Torres' Model of Hispanic Identity Development (1999) which

provides a framework for understanding the identity development of Latinos in their first year of college. Her groundbreaking model took into consideration three levels of influence: (a) the environment where the student grew up, for example either in a diverse or dominant culture environment; (b) family influence and generational status is offered as two strands of dimensional influence such as parental assignation of culture of origin and the level of parental acculturation; and (c) self-perception and status in society is offered as the third influence centering around the students' perceived privilege of their culture of origin.

In this model, Torres proposed that two processes can occur in Latinos'/Latinas' lives and that a focus on these two processes can help us gain insight into Latino students' identity development. The two processes were (a) cultural dissonance, which occurred when conflict with culture arose as the student perceives different cultural expectations than his/her own; and (b) changes in relationships, primarily with peers. Therefore, when the student perceived a positive relationship this experience yielded positive outcomes in his/her development; however, if the student perceived a negative relationship, then his/her conflict may not yet be resolved.

Abes, Jones, and McEwen's (2000) description of the identity process and Torres' Model of Hispanic Identity Development suggest that identity development is not a static and linear process, and thus these models may be a more pertinent way to better understand the Latino student experience.

### **Validation Theory**

Rendón (1994) proposed validation theory as an effective theoretical framework when working with diverse students, and that validating students early in the student

experience, in and out of the classroom, positively influenced student retention. For instance, in this study, Rendón (1994) recruited a sample ( $n=132$ ) of freshmen students of color from various institutions and found that faculty, friends, parents, and siblings played important roles in providing validation for the students' educational success.

Collectively, this research (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Berger & Milem, 1999; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, Carter & Supler, 1996; Rendón, Jalomo & Nora, 2000) supports the notion that for students of color, and Latinos in this case, family and community may serve to strengthen retention and prompts researchers at the present time to consider these variances of student experiences in retention.

### **Summary and Implications**

Research documented parental involvement as an important factor in student achievement from K-12 and on different types of support at various grade levels, and researchers have proposed models for enhancing parental involvement. Across the spectrum—teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and researchers—proclaimed parental involvement as critical in students achieving positive educational outcomes. For various ethnic groups, parental support and involvement was related to student achievement. In addition, studies conducted regarding parental involvement during high school encompassed the college-ready process and made recommendations for stronger parental involvement at this stage of the college process (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). The parental involvement research, however, seems to diminish once students transition into college. For instance, Torrez (2004) found that parental support was stronger in the younger school years and diminishes at higher-grade levels.

Empirical studies on attrition indicated no single explanation for student attrition, and indicated many other factors (such as student characteristics, identity development, student development, cognitive development, ethnic background, and cultural realities) as reasons students left college early. These studies on attrition have enriched robust conversations from Tinto's model and proposed new directions. Tinto's (1993) assertion that students must separate themselves from familial communities to successfully integrate on college campuses warrants on-going discussion, especially as the model applies to parental involvement of Latinos in higher education. Research on attrition needs to consider the multiple dimensions of the student characteristics, ethnic background, and cultural realities to report more fully all of the reasons why students leave college early.

Further research that addresses the parental involvement in higher education may reveal ways to further support Latinos throughout their educational experience. Otherwise, well-intentioned practitioners may develop intervention strategies through theoretical models which benefit some and unknowingly disadvantage others. Latino students already face obstacles in getting into higher education (Cantrell, 2003). Therefore, having a better understanding of their parental support and the role it plays in their retention may help to determine the type of necessary programmatic interventions that may help retain Latinos until graduation.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative methodology to address and answer the research questions listed below:

1. How do Latino parents participating in the study describe the support they are providing to their son/daughter in higher education?
2. How do Latino parents describe the ways in which the University supports and does not support their son/daughter while attending higher education?
3. What do Latino parents say the institution does or does not do in supporting them while their son/daughter attends higher education?

This chapter describes the specific methods that were employed and includes the following subsections: methodological overview; data collection; and data analysis.

#### **Methodological Overview**

This study employed a case study/cross-case analysis design. Merriam (2002) describes a case study as an in-depth exploration of a social unit (i.e., a bounded system). This study examined the experiences of seven parents<sup>7</sup> of students who participated and completed a summer program<sup>8</sup> and maintained continuous enrollment at the University. Employing a case study/cross-case analysis design allowed for in-depth exploration of parental and student experiences at various points in the university experience. The reason for using parents of students at different points of their collegiate careers was to determine if levels of parental support in the later years of college differ from the first year of college. A cross-case analysis also allowed for a comparison of themes across

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<sup>7</sup> Parents were defined as anyone who had legal guardianship of the student.

<sup>8</sup> Summer program is referred to as Summer Bridge, a six-week program for students newly admitted to the university immediately out of high school and it is held the summer before their first semester of college.

parents' experiences from different school enrollment periods (i.e., summer and different years of enrollment in college such as the freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior years).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### **Selecting Participants**

The participants in this study were selected from a pool of participants generated by using a convenient sampling strategy at a public four-year Hispanic-Serving Institution in the southwestern part of the United States. Specifically, the parents were selected from the University-sponsored EOP program, which provides support for low-income students attending a public four-year institution. EOP provides student support throughout the university experience and implements a six-week Summer Bridge Program to help incoming students transition to the university life during the summer before the student's first semester of college.

This institution and its EOP's Summer Bridge Program were selected based on the institution's current designation as a HSI and the fact that the EOP program was a likely source of the kinds of research participants being sought. For example, 68% of the students in the EOP program are Latino. The study examined the experiences of a number of volunteer parents of students who both participated in the EOP's Summer Bridge Program and maintained continuous enrollment at the University. The procedures used for generating and selecting volunteers are described in the next section.

#### **Procedures for Gaining Access and Attracting Volunteer Participants**

The researcher works as an administrator at the institution which houses the EOP Program and facilitated access to the program and the parents of Summer Bridge students. In addition, the EOP Program Director had an interest in the findings of this

study (see Appendix A for a copy of the letter from the director approving the research). The EOP Program Director designated the Summer Bridge counselor to assist the researcher with the recruitment of parents of Summer Bridge participants from various academic years via mail.

### **Recruitment Process**

A recruitment letter, written by the researcher in English and Spanish, was sent to the parents of Summer Bridge students via the Summer Bridge counselor. Specifically, the letter was sent to the parents of students participating in Summer Bridge Program 2010 and to parents of students who successfully completed the Summer Bridge Program in previous years and maintained enrollment through different academic years (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior). The letter introduced the researcher and described the study that was to be conducted. The letter asked parents to volunteer by responding to the researcher directly so that those affiliated with the program would not know the names of those who volunteered to participate. (See Appendix B for a copy of the letter to parents.)

Once parents voluntarily responded to the letter, the researcher selected the volunteers based on the following criteria:

1. Parents of students who participated in Summer Bridge and maintained continuous enrollment at the University.
2. Parents must be of Latino descent.
3. Parent gender distribution was considered across the five enrollment periods so that both male and female perspectives were included from parents and students.



Letters inviting parents to participate in the study were sent in late May 2010, immediately after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the study. Over 80 invitations were sent to parents of students who had participated in Summer Bridge cohorts since 2006. Approximately 18% (15 invitations) were returned from the postmaster since some students had moved and had not yet updated their addresses. Parents were asked to contact the researcher by phone. The researcher tape-recorded a phone message in Spanish and English asking respondents to leave their contact information. Twenty participants (25%) responded by phone that they were interested in participating. From these volunteers, several were parents who were ineligible to participate for a number of reasons. Some students, for example, had stopped-out<sup>9</sup> to attend a community college to make up coursework, which meant they were not currently enrolled at the University (but had planned to return at some point). The son/daughters of other volunteers from this pool were not attending for non-completion of the Entry Level Math Requirement (which is to be completed by the end of their first year of enrollment).

### **Selection Process**

The researcher intended to interview between eight to 10 parents, assuming that every student was raised in a nuclear family which consisted of a mother and father family structure. However, the results demonstrated students had various family structures. Some of the students had parents that were from non-traditional family structures and some of these parents were single parents. Thus, seven parents from a

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<sup>9</sup> The institution defines stop-out as students leaving the campus for one semester without submitting a request for a formal leave of absence.

variety of family structures (single, married, separated, and step-parents) were interviewed.

Parent volunteers were contacted and given additional information about the study. The final selection consisted of parents from students who maintained enrollment with good academic standing, and those who were registered for the next term and showed no record of stopping out. While the response rate was 25% (20 parents), only 12 parents from this group met the criteria for the study. In addition, of the 12 parents who agreed to participate, 41% were not available to be interviewed due to summer travel plans. Thus, the researcher opted to interview only those who were available during the summer months to move forward with the study within the time period which was set for the study at its outset.

The participants ended up being a mother of a female senior, a mother of a male junior (stepfather declined the interview due to work schedules and other considerations), a stepfather of female sophomore, a mother and father of a male first-year student, and a mother and father of a male Summer Bridge (summer 2010) student. These parents were selected purposefully to ensure diversity of parental roles by academic year as well as gender diversity with parents and students. Each student had maintained good academic standing, completed her/his term successfully, and maintained continuous enrollment at the University. In addition, these students were registered and had paid tuition for the following term. Table 1 illustrates the sample selection by gender of both parents and students.

Table 1

*Sample Selection by Gender of Both Parents and Students*

<b><i>Grade Level</i></b>	<b><i>Senior</i></b>	<b><i>Marital Status</i></b>
Student	Female	
Parent (s)	Female	Married (Father in Mexico)
<b><i>Grade Level</i></b>	<b><i>Junior</i></b>	
Student	Male	
Parent (s)	Female <sup>10</sup>	Married
<b><i>Grade Level</i></b>	<b><i>Sophomore</i></b>	
Student	Female	
Parent (s)	Male	Legally separated stepfather
<b><i>Grade Level</i></b>	<b><i>Freshman</i></b>	
Student	Male	
Parent (s)	Male and Female	Married
<b><i>Grade Level</i></b>	<b><i>Summer Bridge</i></b>	
Student		
Parent (s)	Male	
	Male and Female	Married

**Document Collection**

The researcher also collected EOP's Summer Bridge Program-related documents, including program descriptions, program history, program expectations, year-end reports and web-page information. Glesne (2006) describes document collection and analysis as an important method which provides the researcher with additional information to further understand the contextual dimensions of the research conducted. In this case, a document collection and analysis of EOP and Summer Bridge assisted the researcher in better

<sup>10</sup> The stepfather declined because he believed that his wife could better speak for her son, but he supported his stepson's educational goals. In addition, his work schedules could not accommodate an interview.

understanding the history, programmatic functions, and program expectations of the EOP's Summer Bridge. This knowledge was compared with what research participants said about the program, the initial summer college experience, and the college experience after the first, second, third, and fourth years.

### **Interview Procedures**

The researcher used an interviewing approach for this study in order to “allow [the researcher] to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341); in this case, the perspective of the parents. As noted earlier, the researcher speaks Spanish fluently and made language accommodations for the parent interviews according to the preference of the parents. In addition, for the convenience of the parents the research site was their home. Ninety percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. The researcher tape-recorded and took notes during the interviews. The researcher also transcribed the interview tapes verbatim and translated the Spanish interviews to English after the follow-up interview. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and the follow up interviews about half-hour.

### **Interview Approach**

The researcher employed the interview guide approach. The interview guide approach to interviewing utilizes a series of topics or questions to be raised by the interviewer, but not necessarily in the same way across interviews or in precisely the same order. The interview guide approach, in short, provided some degree of standardization and insured that participants addressed prepared research topics and questions. The interview guide approach also provided flexibility and permitted the researcher to explore unanticipated topics as they arose during the course of an interview

(Patton, 2002). To help parents be more at ease, the researcher provided a copy of the research questions ahead of time to allow the parents to glance at the questions and have an idea of what they could anticipate being asked (See Appendix C for a copy of the interview guide which was used.)

### **Post-Interview Process**

In order to ensure validity of the data, the researcher double-checked that the interview was tape-recorded throughout its entirety and conducted a review of the notes and quotes which were taken during the interview for clarity. In addition, this post-interview process entailed the researcher conducting a self-evaluation to determine if she gathered all of the information which she intended and to assess how successfully she conducted the interview. According to Patton (2002), “this kind of post-interview ritual requires discipline” (p. 384), however, he recommends this post-interview process as a necessary practice in qualitative research to ensure the validity of the data and also to help the researcher further assess if interview follow-up is necessary.

### **Researcher’s Process**

I contacted the parents over the phone after they called the number on the invitation letter. While they showed interest in participating, initially, they seemed a bit nervous and skeptical. I began my personal story about coming to this country and not being able to speak English. Speaking to them in their native language facilitated the dialogue. My personal story seemed to put them at ease. I then explained the purpose of my study.

The interviews were conducted from June 19, 2010, through July 30, 2010—after the Fall registration period for continuing students had closed. Being registered for the

Fall semester was an indication that students would be returning the following semester. All of the parents requested their interview in Spanish except for Lucy (a second-generation; U.S.-born mother of the Junior male student) whose interview was conducted in English. I took brief notes while listening in order to capture key points and quotes and as the interview moved from topic to topic.

The interview process was new and foreign to all parents. Parents had not experienced someone coming to their house specifically to interview them about their experiences when having children attend higher education. As mentioned earlier, parents seemed somewhat skeptical until I shared my personal story. I explained to the parents that I was born in Mexico, and told them that I came to this country when I was eight years old. Communicating in their language helped to build rapport. I explained to the parents that the project was for the completion of my doctoral degree. They immediately moved to congratulate me. One parent said to me, *Que bueno que trabajo duro para escalar* (“Good for you; you worked hard to achieve upward mobility”). The cultural connection seemed to help the process and the other interviews moved along nicely.

After having parents sign the consent form, I explained to them that there was no right or wrong answer. They could take their time answering the questions and if other thoughts surfaced from previous questions they could share those too, if they wanted to do so. Most interviews lasted approximately one hour, depending on the conversational style of the parents.

I placed a small microphone on their shirt. Some parents seemed to ignore the tape recorder as we moved deeper into the conversation. This microphone helped because the noise around could be concealed and their voices were recorded with

minimal noise in the background. Sometimes there were children playing or dogs barking in the background while I was conducting the interviews in homes but it was not distracting. Our conversation kept moving along. As mentioned earlier, I met with all parents in their homes in order to accommodate their work schedules, except for one parent. I met one parent at McDonalds and sat in a corner table. The noise cancellation microphone was very helpful with this interview.

### **Interview Follow-Up Process**

The researcher informed the parents that a follow-up interview was to be conducted in order to clarify any responses from the initial interviews and to ensure the accuracy of their responses. This process, in short, was a form of what qualitative researchers call member checking. Conducting member checks not only ensures the trustworthiness and consistency of the data but also allows participants to see if the researcher's interpretation makes sense to them and that the interpretation accurately reflects perceptions of their experiences (Mathison, 1988).

To accomplish this process, the researcher interacted with the parents during a second appointment at a time convenient for the parents. These appointments took no more than half an hour. The researcher shared the interview transcripts with the parents in an effort to check for accuracy and document any changes which the parents requested. In some cases, the parents asked the researcher to read the transcript aloud. This helped them to make modifications. Most transcripts were approved by the participants without changes. The changes made by the parents were to add more to their context versus changes in language or perception. The researcher noted the additions in the margins of

the paragraphs to ensure accuracy and made actual corrections after completing the interview follow-up.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of narrative approach was used to analyze the data in this study. Polkinghorne (1995, 1988) describes the analysis of narrative strategy as coding the story into themes, categories, and subcategories. An emergent coding process was utilized in which categories are established after an initial review of the data and refined through subsequent reviews of interview transcripts.

The data analysis process for this study, in other words, consisted of sorting, categorizing, and identifying qualitative themes which emerged from the parent interviews. Themes emerged from topics which seemed salient to the parents. These themes cut across a number of broad categories and subcategories. The researcher used the research questions from the study to begin identifying potential categories as a starting point for sorting the data. Table 2 illustrates the transformation of research questions into codes.

Table 2

#### *Example Starting Point for Sorting Data*

Research Questions	Coding description	Code
Q1: How do Latino parents participating in the study describe the support they are providing to their son/daughter in higher education?	Parent Perspective of Support for Their Son/Daughter	PPTS



Table 2

*Example Starting Point for Sorting Data Cont.*

Q2: How do Latino parents describe the ways in which the University supports and does not support their	Parents Perspective of University Support for Their Son/Daughter	PPUS
Q3: What do Latino parents say the institution does or does not do in supporting them while their son/daughter attends higher education?	Parents Perspective of University Support for Them	PPUST

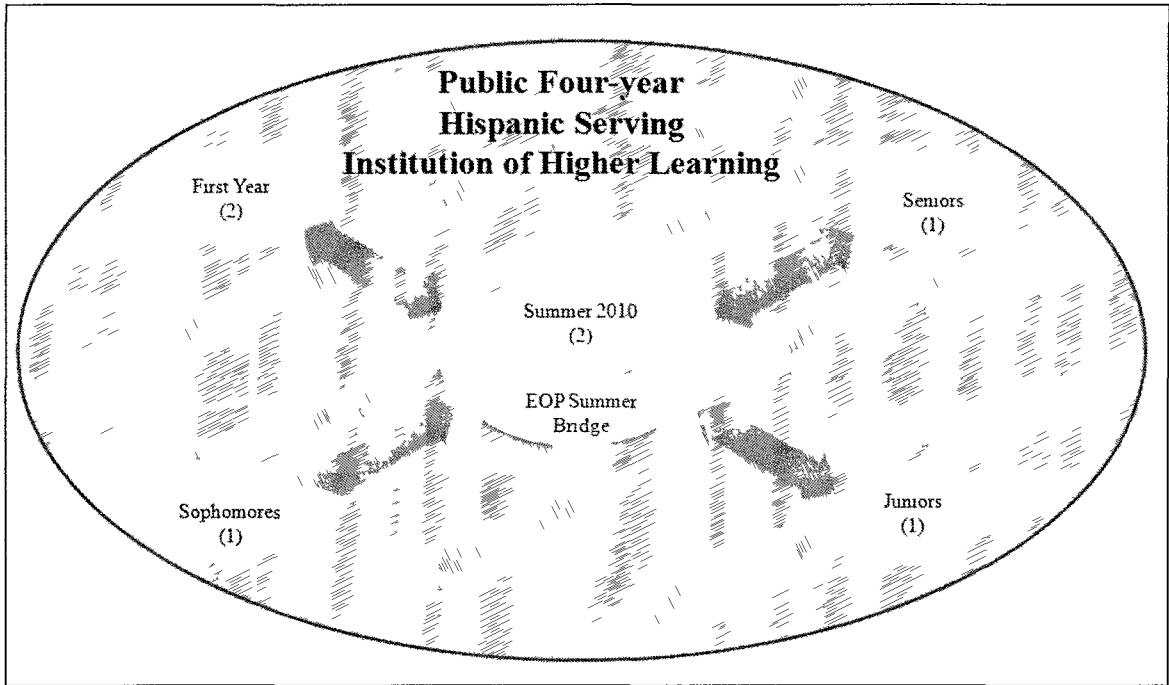
Subcategories under Q1: Parent's perspective of support for their son/daughter included: Code=Respect for self=RFS and Code=Respect for others=RFO; Code=Life Conversations=LC. Categories were created accordingly, depending on the type of data that emerged. In the study, categories and subcategories were developed inductively from the data. Once the researcher identified the categories and subcategories within each case, she conducted a cross-case analysis to compare similar and distinct categories of the individual experiences from the students' different years of enrollment (i.e., initial college experience and subsequent years).

The researcher triangulated the data by comparing and contrasting the data across the different time periods. Mathison (1988) describes the importance of triangulation and how triangulation enhances the validity of the research findings. Triangulation compares the data about the experience of each parent—from different perspectives (in this case the perspectives of five different university periods: initial college experience through

Summer Bridge, freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years). Table 3 illustrates the students' different enrollments periods that were studied.

Table 3

*Students' Different Enrollment Periods*



The researcher also triangulated parent data with data from the results of document analysis from EOP's Summer Bridge Program.

**Document Analysis**

The document analysis consisted of analyzing various documents which pertain to EOP's Summer Bridge (i.e., year-end reports, recruitment brochures, web information, recruitment, EOP admissions criteria, and any type of communication documents addressed to parents and students). The document analysis consisted of identifying categories and subcategories and themes. The research questions were used as a starting point to sort through the categories, subcategories, and themes derived from the

documents. Conducting a document analysis provided greater insight into the communication dimensions that intersected between and among parents, students, and the program, and identifying these communication intersections was a primary goal in the document analysis.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

#### **Delimitations**

This study focused on studying the experiences of parents from one EOP Summer Bridge Program at one HSI institution. Gathering data from parents of other Summer Bridge programs at other HSI institutions and using this sample as a comparison group would be ideal; nevertheless, the results of this study may still be useful to HSIs that reflect a similar population in its service region.

#### **Limitations**

As with other qualitative studies, interviewing only a select number of parents reduced the opportunity to collect data on cultural variation experiences of parents who exist in the Latino community, which hampers its applicability to Latino sub-groups. Another potential limitation is that parents may have shared what they wish they would do to help support their son/daughter instead of what they actually are doing or have done. At the very least, this wish to favorably support their son/daughter may possibly distort the data.

### **Researcher's Perspective**

Before concluding this chapter on methodology, it seems appropriate to say something about the primary “instrument” in this and most other qualitative studies, i.e., the researcher. Educators know that every child brings unique talents and abilities to the

classroom. Understanding students' unique needs while they are in our care for learning in and out of the classroom is one of the more important responsibilities of an educator. In this study, the term educator is utilized to refer to teachers, principals, administrators, faculty, and staff in any given learning institution. This researcher oversees an area of the University responsible for academic support and has an interest in increasing the retention of all students at the University. In addition, the researcher has an interest in working with her institution to sustain the 25% Latino undergraduate enrollment in order to preserve the recently received HSI campus designation.

The researcher belongs to the same ethnic background, a notable strength of this study because she quickly built rapport and communicated in the parents' language; however, a potential for bias existed and the researcher monitored her subjectivity by keeping a journal of her cultural assumptions during the interview and while analyzing the data. Peshkin (1988) describes the importance of keeping subjectivity in check by identifying the researcher's subjective "I" tendencies. For example, through his personal subjectivity audit, Peshkin identified six categories of "I's" to keep in check: (a) ethnic maintenance, (b) community maintenance, (c) researcher, (d) justice seeker, (d) pedagogical-meliorist, and (e) humanist. Peshkin proposes that we each bring subjectivity and, if we do not identify and manage our subjectivity, we could possibly distort the outcome of the study. The researcher was vigilant for any salient "I's" and, in particular, for the ethnic maintenance "I" since she belongs to the same ethnic background as the parents participating in this study. Thus, the researcher used reflective journaling. In addition, during the post-interview process, not only did the researcher conduct a self-evaluation, but also used this process to monitor any cultural assumptions

which surfaced during the interview and during the data analysis phase which helped to avoid drawing any conclusions based on prior cultural knowledge.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE FINDINGS**

After a brief review of the study's purpose and research questions, this chapter describes findings which emerged from the interviews of seven parents. Information about participant demographics is presented, followed by a summary of each parent's story and a discussion of themes that cut across the different stories. The presented themes are associated with each of the study's research questions. The chapter ends with a summary of the cross-case analysis findings.

### **Review of the Study's Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to provide useful information centering on the role parental support plays in the retention of Latino students in higher education. Central to this study is the qualitative analysis of Latino parent narratives that focus on how they feel about their children attending college, the impact that college attendance has had on both children and family, and the degree (or range) of support parents provide their children as they navigate the academic environment. Furthermore, this study gathered data concerning parental perceptions regarding the range of academic, social, and emotional support universities provide their children while attending an institution of higher education, and how these perceptions impact parents' own support efforts and strategies for their children. The following overarching research questions guided this study:

1. How do Latino parents describe the support they are providing to their son/daughter in higher education?
2. How do Latino parents describe the ways in which the University supports and does not support their son/daughter while attending higher education?

3. What do Latino parents say the institution does or does not do in supporting them while their son/daughter attends higher education?

### Participant Demographics

Table 4 provides the demographic information of the parents who participated in the study. As Table 4 indicates, and as was also noted in Chapter 3, parent volunteers were selected based on ethnicity and the academic experiences of the parents' children. Specifically, participants had to be of Latino decent and parents of students who completed Summer Bridge and had maintained continuous enrollment. The final pool of volunteer participants all came from the same country of origin, Mexico, except for one parent who was a U.S. born, second-generation Mexican-American.

Table 4

#### *Parent Demographics*

Participant	Age	Children	Educational Background	Marital Status	Country of Origin
Maria	50	Five children; one college graduate; daughter in senior year of college; one son not in college, and two younger sons in elementary school	No schooling	Married husband living in Mexico	Puebla, Mexico
Lucy	45	Two children; one in Junior year in college and one in elementary school	High school graduate	Married/ husband declined interview	U.S. born second generation Mexican American; Parents from Guerrero, Mexico

Table 4

*Parent Demographics (continued)*

Andres	49	Stepdaughter in the sophomore year in college, one daughter married; grandson living with him and in elementary school	Elementary school in Mexico	Single	Guadalajara, Mexico
Luis	46	Two children: one in elementary school and one freshman in college	none	Married to Rosa	Oaxaca, Mexico
Rosa	39	Same as above	High School in Mexico	Married to Luis	Oaxaca, Mexico
Hector	53	Son in Summer Bridge 2010; three grown married children with no college background. Has three grandchildren	Elementary School in Mexico	Married to Marichu	Colima, Mexico
Marichu	50	Same as above	Elementary School in Mexico	Married to Hector	Zamora, Michoacán, Mexico

**Parent Interviews**

The data gathered from the parent interviews has been organized thematically based on the students' family background, children's college attendance impact on the family, parents' perceptions of support and involvement, and parents' perceptions of University support for parents and their children.

Thus, this section presents these themes in brief summaries from the interviews with each of the seven parents. The summaries are presented in order by parents of students from the highest class level (i.e., seniors) of their children to the lowest (i.e., incoming first-year students). Pseudonyms have been used in order to keep the identities of participants anonymous.



### **Maria (Mother of a Senior Female in College)**

**Family background.** Maria is a mother of five; two girls and three boys. The two youngest boys are in elementary school; the oldest son is of college age, but he decided not to attend college. Maria reiterated that she and her husband had immigrated to this country to provide their children a better life through education. Except for the two youngest boys (who were born in the United States), all their children were born in Puebla, Mexico. The family arrived in the United States about 15 years ago. Maria indicated that she and her husband intended to return to Mexico to live once the children's education was completed or they got married.

**Children's college attendance impact on the family.** Maria's two daughters were much more interested in attending college than were her sons. The oldest daughter received a teaching credential and was successfully teaching elementary school. This made the college process somewhat more familiar for Maria and her second daughter. For instance, the eldest daughter's experience of graduating with a college degree provided Maria with some insight and knowledge on how to navigate university life. In essence, the eldest daughter's accrued social capital in the form of knowledge about navigating the college system could then be shared with her younger sibling and Maria.

Maria and her family live in a one-bedroom townhome and used all the space available to them. Maria described her family as self-sacrificing to help their children have a better life. When I arrived at Maria's home for my interview, Maria sat in her living room browsing through stacks of bills. Her younger daughter greeted me and introduced herself. I introduced myself and began telling her about myself and the research project. The living room nestled a huge king-sized bed which made the living

room also a second bedroom. A light curtain divided the seating area where Maria and I sat for the interview from the sleeping area.

Before we began the interview, I noticed that Maria kept perusing her bills until I asked her if she wanted to reschedule the interview for another time so that she could tend to what looked like an important task for her at that moment. She explained that she was looking for a rent receipt because she paid in cash and wanted to be sure that she had not lost it; otherwise she could not prove she had paid it and this could bring potential problems in the future. She finally found the receipt and then felt more at ease. Maria, then, began to share her story. She explained why her husband was not living with her and why he could not participate in the study. He was working in Mexico to help support the family.

Maria indicated that she and her husband both worked hard to make ends meet. In fact, Maria indicated that her son felt pressure to contribute to the family's fiscal situation. Consequently, he left high school in his sophomore year and began working to help his parents with the finances. Maria and her husband begged him to return to school but he chose to help his parents instead.

Maria and her husband had both worked hard in Mexico and left their home for "the land of opportunity." They also brought all of their children to the United States to have a better life. Maria and her husband continued to own a small home in Mexico with property for cultivating crops, and her husband lived there for several months out of the year to tend the land.

Maria felt very fortunate because she worked two jobs. She cleaned houses as a second job after her full-time job in a factory. Maria never attended school, but somehow

she had picked up the ability to read Spanish and understand some English words as well. She married young and her priorities were her children and her husband. She indicated that the education she never received was the reason why she had to work two jobs. This is why she wanted all of her children to have the education that she never had. She did not want them to suffer as she and her husband had suffered in order to make ends meet. She mentioned that she worked hard to help her daughter with educational expenses. For Maria and her husband, providing this help was a priority.

**Maria's perceptions of support and involvement.** Maria referred to her experiences in her adopted country as a "sad story." I asked her why she referred to what I believed to be a successful story—given the first daughter's graduation from college and employment as a teacher and the pride that Maria expressed about this—a sad one? She then began to explain that since her first daughter was enrolled in elementary school, she would never leave her children during school functions. Maria accompanied her eldest daughter, for example, to all school functions and attended meetings that would be translated in bits and pieces by her daughter and others from the school who offered to help translate from English to Spanish. However, translators were not always available. In these cases, Maria would sit through entire programs without understanding a word, and would later have to ask other parents who spoke Spanish and English about the information that was given.

Maria believed that the teachers knew that she did not understand English but they seemed appreciative and admired her for making an effort to attend school functions with her children, despite her limited English proficiency. Still, for Maria, it was sad that

she could not understand the language and, at times, felt inadequate sitting through entire programs not understanding how she could further support her children.

Although Maria had no direct contact or involvement with the University programs which were designed to support her daughters during their college years, Maria did indicate that she gave advice to her daughter who is currently a senior in college. She indicated that she encouraged her daughter to rest for periods of time so that she could do well in school and with homework projects. She reported encouraging her daughter to study and limit her outings by reiterating that, *no dejes para mañana; lo que puedes hacer hoy* (“don’t leave for tomorrow what you can do today”). She also indicated that she reminded her daughter to respect herself and everyone. Maria said, “I tell her to remember her commitment to herself and respect it. I don’t want her to lose her self-respect.” She also ingrained in her daughter the need to always be selfless because, although the family had very little materially, Maria believed that God had given them health and other blessings. Thus, an opportunity to pursue higher education was an opportunity given to few, and she believed that her daughter should use her talents and feel fortunate.

#### **Maria’s perception of University support for parents and their children.**

Maria was not entirely sure of what the various University programs designed to support students offered, but she assumed they provided some sort of support for her daughter, because her daughter talked positively about them and referred to staff members by their first names. With her first daughter, Maria had not attended any functions at the University. When the time came for her second daughter to attend college, Maria

believed that she had a better understanding of where to go to ask for help. She did not do this, however.

To be sure, Maria knew of some programs such as Gear Up, a program which prepares students for college and could even mention some of the names of the counseling staff. Furthermore, Maria said that she would have been willing to participate in helping with events but that she had never been asked by school personnel from elementary school up to, and including, the college experience. According to Maria, had she understood the language or had someone approached her about involvement she would have helped with anything. She said, *auque sea a acomodar mesas o ayudar a decorar* (“I could even help with setting up tables or help to decorate”). Nobody ever asked, however, and Maria was too insecure about her English language skills to be proactive.

Despite her lack of direct contact with the University support programs, Maria was grateful to programs such as Gear Up and Summer Bridge. She believed that her daughter was getting the guidance which she needed in college by participating in these programs.

### **Lucy (Mother of a Junior Male in College)**

**Family background.** Lucy lived in the same neighborhood for the past 45 years. Her mother also lived on the same street. Lucy is a second-generation, Mexican-American born in the United States. Lucy was married to her second husband but had one son from the first marriage. Her husband decided not to participate in the interview, in part because his work schedule was complex with two jobs, but also because he believed that it was his wife who could best speak about their son’s college experiences.

He did indicate, however, that though he was not the boy's natural father, he liked that he was making something of himself.

Lucy's first marriage was difficult and ended in divorce, primarily, she said, because her ex-husband mistreated her and especially her son. She said that her first husband would routinely mock her son and tell him that he would never amount to anything. The divorce was nasty and she vowed that she would do everything in her power to provide everything that she could to give her son a better life.

**Children's college attendance impact on the family.** Lucy cleaned houses and babysat for a living. After her divorce, Lucy was challenged with the need to get by with fewer resources. Consequently, she could not afford clothes for her son. Fortunately, a kind lady took them under her wing and bought clothing and shoes for her son. This lady also contributed by buying sports clothes that her son needed when participating in sports. "She became like his *Madrina* [Godmother]," Lucy said.

This godmother also helped her son with the college admissions process and encouraged his participation in Summer Bridge. Lucy had promised herself that her son would get an education, no matter the cost. Lucy wanted to tell her ex-husband how wrong he was about their son, and looked forward to telling him her son graduated from college.

Lucy's face lit up when she spoke about her son. She was so proud of him. She believed that her son had survived the barrio, which was not easy, and that he had become an example for many Latino boys in the neighborhood.

**Lucy's perceptions of support and involvement.** Lucy proudly talked about how she talked with her friends and family about getting their kids into college and used

her son as an example. She saw herself as an education “ambassador,” even though she did not know about the intricacies of college. According to Lucy, college was the ticket for her son to get a good job and support his future family. She knew that there were resources available, and she said,

My husband used to tell my son that he would not amount to anything and I never wanted this to impact him. I have always told him to keep his self-respect intact and no one can hurt him. And, as long as you could find a type of Madrina to ask for help, you could make it.

In her ambassador role, Lucy tried to convince other family members and friends to seek the help that they needed to get on the path of college. Lucy also thought that she wouldn’t mind taking classes herself at the local community college, but having home responsibilities and taking care of other younger children after work hours to make ends meet made achieving this goal difficult.

**Lucy’s perception of University support for parents and their children.** Lucy described having different experiences with her son’s educational institutions since her son transitioned to the University. She said that she had not received any letters informing her of University events as she did when her son was in high school. She had no idea of any type of events that she could attend. She did not quite understand what her new role was now that her son attended college, and she described this as a “jolt”—a silent and unfamiliar educational experience which she could not understand:

In high school at least you get letters from teachers telling you about parent and teacher meetings or events that you can go to. At the University, it is silent almost like kids no longer have parents. I have never met anyone from the University or been invited to anything, and this is my son’s third year in college. He lives with me and I ask him about school all the time. He says that he just needs time to study. At times, though, I see him discouraged because he tells me that he is not going to make it. I keep telling him to respect his dignity and remind him about what his future would look like if he finishes school.

### **Andres (Stepfather of a Sophomore Female in College)**

**Family background.** Andres was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and was legally separated from his second wife. His stepdaughter decided to live with him. Andres had legally adopted his daughter during his second marriage when the girl was three years old.

Andres also had children from his first marriage. His eldest daughter from his first marriage lived in Mexico, was married, and had five children. Andres also had brought the eldest grandson, 11-years-old, to live with him in the United States.

**Children's college attendance impact on the family.** Andres was willing to talk with me, but he was called in to work overtime the morning of our pre-arranged meeting. Therefore, we moved the time to late afternoon and met at a central location for both of us—at a McDonalds restaurant. The reason why he worked two jobs, he explained, was to help his stepdaughter with college tuition. This decision had impacted the family positively, yet it was not while making sacrifices to help her accomplish her goal.

When we met, Andres seemed very skeptical about my doctoral student role. He asked if I had any type of identification which I could provide. I showed him my school identification as well as a business card from the school where the research project was being conducted (and where I also worked). He kept apologizing and saying that these days one couldn't be too careful because there are so many scams. He hesitated to sign the consent form. I wondered if perhaps he could not read, so I offered to read it aloud. I explained the content of the consent form and he proceeded to tell me that I could go on asking the questions. He signed the consent form, and I gave him a copy of the interview



guide so he could follow along with the questions. I told him that he did not have to answer any questions which made him feel uncomfortable.

Andres worked in a hotel restaurant during the day and evenings, and weekends in a warehouse helping with shipping and receiving. He indicated that he had finished only elementary school (in Mexico) and that he had to work two jobs to pay for tuition and books for his daughter. I asked him if she knew about financial aid and he, hesitantly, said that she did not qualify because of her immigration status. I gently followed up by saying that I also had the challenging experience of having to pay for my own tuition in my earlier education years until my immigration status was finalized. His tension began to dissipate as I explained my personal challenges of paying for my own schooling. He continued to share his story freely and seemed more comfortable answering the questions after this exchange. The exchange also made me understand the source of his mistrust.

**Andres's perceptions of support and involvement.** Andres talked about his stepdaughter wanting a career as a reporter, but indicated that he was not quite sure if this was the best path for her because of her weight. He believed that her weight would be a barrier to this career; I asked him why? He said that he saw on television that most reporters seemed to always be running in order to chase the next story. If this was the case with all reporters, he believed that this would put her at a disadvantage due to her being overweight. Although he shared his concerns with me, he indicated that he would never tell his daughter his concerns about her career choice; rather, he believed in her drive to succeed and that her drive was the reason he worked so hard to help her. To Andres, there was no one else that could be more proud of his daughter than him:

I've been through two marriages and one thing that got me through is respecting myself first and this is what I tell my daughter. This is why I want her to make decisions about her career and not let my own needs get in the way.

Though Andres was committed to letting his step-daughter make her own career decision, Andres was not shy about talking about his daughter with others. In fact, Andres indicated that telling others about his daughter's school was part of his daily conversations with his family and friends.

**Andres's perception of University support for parents and their children.**

Andres believed that the University would know best on how to advise his step-daughter about a career path and he was supportive of this. His step-daughter was very active in school organizations. He was familiar with *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan* (MEChA), a student volunteer organization which provides support and leadership development for Latino students. His step-daughter had been president of this organization for one year. Therefore, he believed that she was getting some level of support to help her accomplish her educational goals. Andres was also very proud of her for advocating for the needy families and he liked that she participated in marches while she served as president of MEChA.

Andres had never been on a college campus and trusted his daughter to convey information about her schooling. At the conclusion of the interview, Andres was apologetic for asking me so many questions about my identity. He thanked me for the interview and asked if there was anything else which he could do to help.

### **Luis (Father of a Freshman Male in College)**

**Family background.** Luis was born in Oaxaca, Mexico. His wife of 20 years was visiting her relatives in Mexico when the interview took place but had agreed to be interviewed at a later time. The interview took place three weeks later. Luis and his wife lived in the United States for the past 20 years. They have three children; his eldest son had just completed his freshman year in college, his daughter was a junior in high school, and his younger son was in elementary school.

**Children's college attendance impact on the family.** Luis owned a home and worked for a landscape company. His wife worked for a factory which produced plastic. Luis was a man of few but insightful words. For example, at family gatherings Luis used his son as an example of bettering himself by going to college, and highlighted this accomplishment as a way to change his future and the future of those who followed in his son's footsteps. Luis talked about his son as the beacon of light who would light up the way for his cousins and extended family members who wish to change their future through education.

**Luis's perceptions of support and involvement.** Luis spoke about the pride he had for his son and how he encouraged him to continue with his studies. Luis gave his son constant advice about respecting himself and others. He said that without respect, no one ever gets ahead. Since his son was a little boy, Luis' advice to him had always been consistent. Luis said,

Since Juan was a little boy, I would tell him to respect himself and everyone's opinions—his superiors and his co-workers. This is the only way to get ahead and be successful in life.

Luis also encouraged his son to get involved in sports, primarily because he did not want him hanging around the wrong crowd or getting into drugs. Soccer was the preferred sport in his home, and he was pleased that his son was involved in soccer at the University.

**Luis's perception of University support for parents and their children.** When I asked questions about his experiences with University personnel, Luis said he had never set foot on a college campus. Luis, however, had a strong opinion when asked about what he thought should be the ideal relationship between parents and the University. He was quick to answer, *Oh pues tener más comunicación. Pues sería mejor personalmente no? Si, hacer una cita como usted y venir a preguntar así pues para conocer más de la universidad* (“Have more communication and make personal appointments like this one, so we can learn more about the University”).

**Rosa (Mother of a Freshman in College; Married to Luis)**

**Family background.** Like her husband, Luis, had done several weeks earlier, Rosa welcomed me into her house. We sat at the kitchen table as she began to tell me about her experience of living in the United States. Rosa is 39 years old and she was born in Oaxaca, Mexico. Rosa completed high school in Mexico before moving to the United States.

Rosa met Luis upon arriving in the United States. Like her, Luis had come to this country in search of a better life and, consequently, they had similar goals. She married Luis and they have three children. She was very excited to tell me about her son completing his first year of college.

**Children's college attendance impact on the family.** As Rosa welcomed me into her house, a three-year-old girl also came to greet me. Rosa rented a room to her parents in order to make ends meet. She explained that this is how they were able to provide their son with any educational materials he might need.

Rosa was very happy that I had taken the time to talk with her about her experiences during her son's first year of college. Rosa described the experience of having her son in college as the best thing that had ever happened to the family. All the family was now focused on helping the oldest son complete his college degree by providing materials, advice, and reminding him to keep the promise he made to himself and his family about getting a college degree.

**Rosa's perceptions of support and involvement.** Rosa's involvement in her son's college experience began with the day a recruiter from college invited Rosa to attend an event during one of her visits to her son's high school. At another point in the interview, Rosa spoke of how much she liked attending school functions with her son, even though she did not fully understand program presentations. She said:

We all get involved in my son's education. We work two jobs but that does not matter. To us having him keep his self-worth, self-respect by keeping his promises is what matters most.

Rosa was present to hear from the college recruiter who had come to her son's high school campus. Rosa indicated that she was surprised that she was the only parent who was present to hear the information about college. She also noted that the recruiter was very nice, spoke Spanish, and explained the college process to her. When she found out that it only took 2.0 GPA to attend college, she was very excited because her son, at that point, had a 3.0 GPA. This she knew from continually keeping an eye on her son's

academic progress reports. However, her son had decided to go to the Army because he found out that the Army would provide college tuition waivers to pay for college. Through encouragement of the recruiter, who explained to him that getting a college degree first would provide him with greater career and life opportunities wherever he choose to go, he decided to defer the Army possibility.

**Rosa's perceptions of University support for parents and their children.**

Rosa's dream was to become a teacher because she loved working with children. Rosa mentioned that, during her children's elementary and secondary school years, she was always interested in helping out and believed that if she was invited to help take care of students during recess or something similar, she would have been thrilled. She also indicated that now that her son was in college, she never received invitations to attend functions at the college. She said that she wished that she could at least visit the University her son was attending but did not know where to start. Since she never received any invitations as she had done while her son was in high school, she did not know if parents visiting the campus was acceptable or welcomed. Throughout the interview, Rosa kept on thanking me for visiting her and having the opportunity to talk about her experience while her son pursued his degree; she said this was the first time she had ever had contact with anyone from the college. (Although she had met the recruiter, she assumed that the recruiter worked for the high school.)

At one point, Rosa spoke poignantly of the perceived estrangement with the institution which was so much a part of her son's life and so central to the family's hopes and dreams. She said,

I ask my son regularly about school and ask him to describe the classroom, the campus, and how his professors are treating him and if he is getting the help that he needs. I have never been to a college campus. I wish that I could take a tour of the campus so I can see where my son attends classes. I'd like to see a classroom, how it's decorated, and see other kids. I would do this routinely with all my kids in school and at least knew where they were going every day.

### **Hector (Father of a Male Current Summer Bridge Student)**

**Family background.** Hector is 53 years old. He was born in Colima, Mexico, and attended school in Mexico through the sixth grade. He came to the United States during his teenage years in search of a better life and he met his wife, Marichu. They have been married for 34 years. They have four children and three grandchildren. Jose, the youngest of the four, is the first person in the family to attend college.

**Children's college attendance impact on the family.** Hector became very interested in helping parents when his son was in high school. He invited parents he met in school to his house to begin conversations about how to support their children's educational goals. His wish to further help orient parents into the K-12 system, led him to take courses at the local community college to learn how to speak and write English. During the time he was learning how to read and write English, his son was admitted to college and Hector felt more motivated to begin his own business to financially support his son's educational expenses. Hector started his own landscaping business which consisted of mowing lawns for a variety of clients. In addition, he did minor repair jobs, which he found through references from his clients from his landscaping business. This helped to support household finances and he also made enough to help his son purchase needed educational materials.

**Hector's perceptions of support and involvement.** The support he offered other parents led Hector to become a community activist. His activist involvements included being an active participant in *Padres Unidos* (United Parents), an organization he co-founded. This organization helps parents understand the K-12 educational process, government politics, immigration issues, and health concerns. The mission of this organization was to support parents and provide information to parents in their own language.

Because of his leadership role in *Padres Unidos*, Hector was familiar with programs in the middle school and high school such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), College Bound, and Gear Up—programs which prepare students for college. He also was knowledgeable about different seminars and workshops which took place regarding the college admission process. Hector knew some of the basic information about how to get to college but had very little information specifically about how to communicate with college officials.

He was, however, very involved in helping parents during his son's high school years in a variety of ways such as attending parent/teacher conferences, school events, and even volunteering during school field trips. He was continually monitoring his son's school homework and projects and made sure that he did his projects first before any social activities.

Hector was hard on himself because his other children were married and did not pursue higher education. He felt partly responsible for not pushing his other children enough to pursue higher education. However, now he had a great opportunity with Jose, and he was the source of considerable family pride. Hector said,



This is my first son to attend college and the only one in all of our family. I tried hard with the others, but they wanted to get married. They may not have done what I wanted in life for them, but at least they kept their promises to themselves and preserved their self-respect by doing what they set out to do. My son sure did and he is doing this well now that he is in school.

**Hector's perceptions of University support for parents and their children.** In his first experience with higher education, Hector explained that the only time he had an opportunity to meet with college officials was during the Summer Bridge orientation program. However, he indicated that even this meeting occurred not because he had been invited by college officials, but because his son informed him about this program. Because Hector had an interest in learning about the college his son was attending, he and his wife decided to show up with his son.

Hector said that, at the meeting he attended, he and his wife sat in the back of the room and observed the staff giving students the program expectations; he did not find anything addressed specifically to the parents. In addition, the program was conducted exclusively in English and, although he understands some English, he would have liked to have the program communicated in Spanish so that he and his wife could understand the new expectations of their parental role in higher education.

**Marichu (Mother of a Male Current Summer Bridge Student; Married to Hector)**

**Family background.** Marichu was born in Zamora, Michoacan, Mexico. Marichu is Hector's wife; she and Hector have been married for 34 years. Marichu completed elementary school in Mexico. Marichu was proud of all her children, especially her youngest son, who was now enrolled in college, and her grandchildren.

**Children's college attendance impact on the family.** Jose, Marichu and Hector's youngest son, lived on campus through the Summer Bridge Experience and

would go home from Friday to Sunday night to keep his family connection. Jose played soccer on Saturday near his home and would spend the weekend with the family.

Marichu worked at home babysitting her grandchildren and other children from the neighborhood which earned her money to help with the home expenses, and also Jose's educational expenses.

**Marichu's perceptions of support and involvement.** Marichu characterized the Summer Bridge Program in support of her son as a new and refreshing experience. She sat in the back of the room and did not understand what was being conveyed at Summer Bridge orientation to the audience, but she perceived staff as helpful and caring for her son. Marichu expressed concerns about her son eating regularly and about eating times on campus and the type of food he was eating in the college.

She also indicated that when her son came to visit, she made sure to pack a variety of his favorite foods that he could take with him and keep in the dorm's freezer until he was ready to eat them during the week. Her advice to her son was to respect everyone in the college, eat regularly so he can have the energy to study, and come home on weekends to replenish. She said proudly,

My son comes home on weekends. I pack the food he likes and always remind him to stay true to himself; keep his self-respect and don't compromise his values. I tell him I know that you will finish what you started.

**Marichu's perceptions of University support for parents and their children.**

Marichu was grateful that her son had made it to college and was also thankful to the Summer Bridge Program. Marichu seemed nervous during the interview. I asked her why she seemed nervous and assured her that she could take her time answering the questions. She said that this was the first time that someone had taken the time to speak

with her or her husband about their experiences while her son was in college, and she indicated that she felt honored that I had taken the time to do this. She wished that this conversation would have happened earlier with her other children, and she believed that this perhaps would have helped them pursue higher education. Somehow the conversation seemed to reassure her that she and her husband were on the right path when it came to supporting their son.

### **Cross-Case Analysis Findings**

This section provides a summary and discussion of the common themes found in the parent interviews which emerged during a cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis was organized around the research questions and the findings presented here are also organized around categories that correspond to each of the research questions.

Before employing the research questions structure, however, it seems appropriate to make some general comments about the similarities and differences of the parents who participated in this study, as well as about some of the common themes which emerged during the cross-case analysis. This is important to note because, while parents share traditions from the same culture, every parent is unique based on their upbringing and family values which make them unique. For example, parents had different upbringing experiences, family structures, and diverse educational backgrounds. For instance, five of the seven participants had non-traditional family structures and three raised their kids as single parents. Maria's husband lived in Mexico for most of the year, Andres was legally separated from his wife and had adopted his stepdaughter, and Lucy's second husband had no direct involvement in his stepson's education.

One similarity was that all parents were employed, and, in fact, in most cases, they held two jobs, in large part to help support and pay for additional college expenses. For example, Andres, because of his stepdaughters' immigration status, not only worked two jobs but also, at times, held a third job, working occasional weekends in order to help financially support her full college expenses since she did not qualify for financial aid.

In addition to helping out financially, all participants were similar because they also provided other types of emotional and motivational support. Presumably, this similarity among the parents who participated in this study also makes them atypical of many parents of college-age children who are not as involved in their children's lives.

For parents in this study, extraordinary levels of support seemed to emanate from the pride they had in their children's accomplishments. Similarly, a second theme of respect surfaced as a foundational core value: In all the families focused on, in fact, there was an emphasis on respecting oneself, as well as others, and on finishing what one set out to do. A third common theme involved the shared belief that the college knows best. Parents trusted college officials as knowing best about guiding their children's formulation and implementation of educational goals; they believed that their children were receiving the necessary academic support to be successful in college, though they had little evidence other than their children's testimonials to actually support this belief. Indeed, parents characterized their relationships with the institution as distinct and distant from the relationship they had had with their children's K-12 institutions. These general themes will re-emerge in the discussion below about what the cross-case analysis revealed about each of the study's research questions. The discussion now turns to the topic embedded within the study's first research question.

### **Parents' Description of the Support they Provide for their Children**

Parents indicated that they were involved in their children's education and demonstrated their support for their children's educational efforts in ways which many might consider non-traditional. For instance, a common theme of exhibiting pride for their children's involvement in higher education with friends, family, and others was viewed as a tangible way of demonstrating their love and support for their children and their children's efforts to get a college education. As one parent noted,

I feel a lot of pride of him being at that level and I always tell him to work hard at it and take advantage of this because this country has many opportunities; and I can continue to help him financially as best as I can even if I have to work two jobs. I tell everybody that my son is in college and that they should do the same.

Parents also told their children their own stories, including their struggles and their resiliency. Parents overcame challenges with language, education, and cultural differences in order to support their children. Parents would describe the struggles they had to overcome in order to provide basic needs for their children such as clothing, food, and shelter. In addition, they made sure that their children knew that these struggles are exactly what they did not want for their children's future. While the parents did not fully understand the educational process, they clearly valued education as a way to improve their children's quality of life. They would use terms like *echale ganas* (work hard).

A third way in which parents supported their children's educational efforts was by continuously discussing the common theme of respect for self and others with their children. They believed that self-respect would serve as a core value and foundation for their future interactions, including their educational experiences. Respecting self and others, in other words, would serve as the basis for pursuing goals and sustaining future

healthy relationships. Respect for self and others, they argued, would make their children successful not only in higher education but in life, as well.

### **Parents' Description of the Ways the University Supports their Children**

A theme of the “university knows best” emerged in a number of ways. Parents, for example, made frequent references to the University having greater knowledge. They also indicated that they trusted their children were receiving the help that they needed.

This trust may have resulted, at least in part, because of not knowing in detail what was happening at the University (except by listening to their children) or even knowing how to find out first-hand what was happening. To be sure, some parents did know about some services which the University provided their children. Maria, for instance, knew about two distinct University programs, Gear Up and Summer Bridge. She believed that they provided help to her daughter. She also knew some of the names of the personnel who provided assistance to her daughter. But, even Maria knew very little about the actual support the University programs and staff provided.

Lucy and Luis knew even less about University support than Maria did. For example, they did not know anyone on the campus and had never been invited to participate or attend events on campus. They did not feel they could take the initiative and show up on campus without an invitation. Like Maria, however, they assumed that their child was getting some help from Summer Bridge even though they had no real basis—other than their son’s comments—to support their assumption.

Andres’ story about University support knowledge was similar. Andres knew of MEChA a student organization that his daughter was the president of during one year and he assumed that MEChA was helping his daughter in some way. But, as with the others,

his knowledge was limited and vague, based more on belief than actual knowledge, and grounded in the comments children made.

There was nothing negative about what parents perceived about the University when it came providing the support for their children. Parents were grateful to the University and programs in which their children participated. However, they did not quite understand the specific support their children received.

### **Parents' Description of the Ways the University Supports Them**

**The silent experience.** Parents experienced their children's university life as silent. When asked about the support the University provided in helping them support their children pursue a university education, parents indicated that the University was, in essence, silent. Lucy, for instance, described this experience of silence as a jolt. She explained that she was used to receiving letters from her son's K-12 school about activities and functions. Although she indicated that she attended very few events in the course of her son's education, she was keenly aware of what was happening in the school and felt some level connection to the school educators.

Other parents also contrasted the current silence with what had occurred during their children's earlier school experiences. Among other things, they described feeling special when some of the communication from their children's earlier K-12 education sites arrived in Spanish. This gesture made them feel important enough to be included in school events. The University, however, was distant, very foreign to them, and, essentially silent.

### **Parent Levels of Support for their Children by Academic Year**

Part of the focus of the cross-case analysis was on whether levels of parental support for their children appeared to differ across the different enrollment levels (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior). An interesting discovery in this study with an admittedly small sample, given what is typically known about providing extensive support in the first year in college, was that parental levels of support seemed to be less substantial at the beginning of the college experience and much more intense in the upper-grade levels (i.e., junior and senior year). This may indicate that the various programs aimed at the first-year experience were successful and, consequently, parents did not feel as if they needed to do anything. Parents, however, indicated that the later years were a bit different. Specifically, in a number of cases, they found that their children seemed to be giving up the further they got in their educational experience. For instance, Maria, Lucy, and Andres (whose children were in their senior, junior, and sophomore years of college respectively) shared stories of their children giving up and having to continually encourage them by giving them practical life conversations and encouraging them to continue, especially because they were so close to graduation. On the other hand, Rosa, Luis, Marichu, and Hector (whose children were in their freshman and summer college years respectively) were close and provided support but did not seem as intense as their counterparts. According to these parents, their children exhibited an excitement about being admitted to college during the first year. During the later years, however, parents felt that their support had to be intensified by regularly having to remind their children to respect themselves and keep their promises.



### **Triangulation from the Analysis of Institutional Documents**

A review was conducted of EOP's Summer Bridge Program documents, such as program descriptions, program history, program expectations, year-end reports, and web-page information from the past four years. Summer Bridge, as noted earlier in Chapter 3, helps student to transition into the university environment during the summer prior to their first semester of college. During this time, the document analysis revealed consistent communication with students regarding timelines, program descriptions, and program expectations (including forms which needed to be signed and returned), but found limited communication to the parents.

An analysis of the Summer Bridge orientation materials included program description brochure and program agenda. There was slightly more evidence of an attempt to engage parents here. For instance, in 2007, there was one letter crafted in English and Spanish inviting parents of Summer Bridge students to attend an orientation program. The invitation included an RSVP card and requested parents to confirm attendance with University program personnel. The letter, however, lacked information about the goals and objectives of the orientation, and the program agenda was written in English only, as was the welcome from the director, introduction of staff, and delivery of program expectations.

Other institutional documents were reviewed, as well, and, they, too, seemed to support the conclusion that the University engaged in a limited effort to actively inform, much less engage, parents in university life or help them support their children as they pursued a university education. For instance, University Orientations offer orientation

for families and the website offers a newsletter addressed to parents as well as links to college transition tips for parents. Unfortunately, none of the information is in Spanish.

Summer Bridge year-end reports noted several changes in program structure and funding cuts in the last three years. These cuts presumably limited even further what were already very limited attempts to communicate with parents. Targeted communication to parents by student's academic year did not appear in any of the documents reviewed. The document analysis also revealed that invitations to end-of Summer Bridge Program 2008 luncheons were sent, but seemed to have dismal attendance, most likely because they were held during the lunch hour when most parents work. University Orientations and funding levels had been impacted by these changes and the limited invitations to special events, programs, and orientations for parents had diminished over the years.

### **Summary of Cross-Case Analysis Findings**

The findings of this study provide insight into the type of non-traditional support Latino parents provide their children while attending higher education. Parents do not fully understand the system of higher education, but trust that the system is providing their children with the support they need in order to complete their degree. Parents also demonstrated gratitude to the programs which provided services to their children. Although parents are unfamiliar with the higher education system, a desire to become familiar with the system was present. For instance, Rosa wanted to at least see if her son's classroom was similar to the classrooms she had observed in elementary and in high school, but she had not been proactive because of the unfamiliarity with the University and her limited English skills. In addition, the willingness of these parents to

go above and beyond to support their children financially was admirable as most of them held two jobs. Parents found time for the interview; they were also willing to volunteer in helping with tasks during University events within their own capacity. Parents acted as “validating agents” outside the classroom and played a key role in supporting their children’s educational goals (Rendón, 1994). I will discuss this concept further in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

This chapter provides a brief overview of the purpose of the study and research questions, offers a summary of the research methods used in the study, discusses an interpretation of the findings, presents a discussion of implications for policymakers and practitioners, and concludes with a consideration of implications for future research.

### **Overview of Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Extensive research exists regarding undergraduate student departure from institutions of higher education that point to a variety of variables that impact student attrition such as limited financial aid, lack of interaction with faculty and staff, limited involvement, low self-esteem, and family background. Researchers developed various theoretical models to better understand the attrition phenomenon. To date, Vincent Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure (1975, 1987, 1993) is the most widely cited model in the higher education literature when authors are grappling with the undergraduate student attrition issue. However, a number of scholars have argued that Tinto's model fails to truly understand and respond adequately to the attrition of students of color (Berger & Milem, 1999; Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, Carter & Supler, 1996; Rendón, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000).

By contrast, there is an abundance of literature which illuminates the important role parental support plays in supporting Latino academic success (Baharudin & Luster, 1998; Chang, Park, Singh, & Sung, 2009; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). Collectively, this literature suggests parental involvement as a key component of Latinos' academic success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). This literature, however, focuses almost exclusively

on the elementary, middle, and high schools. Consequently, we have little understanding about the role parental support might play in the persistence of students of color at the college and university levels. Beginning to develop an understanding of Latino parental role in supporting their collegiate-level children was the focus of this study. The following overarching research questions guided this study:

4. How do Latino parents describe the support they are providing to their son/daughter in higher education?
5. How do Latino parents describe the ways in which the University supports and does not support their son/daughter while attending higher education?
6. What do Latino parents say the institution does or does not do in supporting them while their son/daughter attends higher education?

### **Summary of Methods Used in the Study**

This study employed a qualitative methodology. Parents of Latino students were interviewed about how they feel about their children attending college; the impact their children's college attendance has had on them and their families, as a whole; and the degree and kinds of support they provide to their children as the children navigate the world of higher education. Data also was gathered regarding parents' perceptions of the academic, social, and emotional support provided by the University programs. The study also examined how, if at all, University support impacted parental support. Seven parents of Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Summer Bridge students who maintained continuous enrollment at the University in various academic years (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) were interviewed.

Initially, each of the participants was treated as an individual case study during data analysis. Brief case studies were presented in the prior chapter. A cross-case analysis procedure also was utilized during the data analysis phase of the study. This procedure consisted of comparing and contrasting parental perceptions about support provided for their children and other related points about their perceptions of University support with what the other parents said. The research questions were used to structure this cross-case analysis. In addition, a document analysis was also conducted for the purpose of triangulating the data from the parents' narratives.

### **Summary of Study Findings**

This study indicates that all seven parents who participated in this study supported their children as they navigated the sometimes-difficult college environment, but that parental support, more often than not, occurred in non-traditional ways. For example, virtually all of the parents reported publicly expressing a sense of pride regarding their children pursuit of higher education. These parental expressions of pride were sources of validation for their children's commitment to pursue a higher education. Validating students in this manner undoubtedly encouraged students to continue to persist in college; not only as a personal goal, but also as a role model to motivate other family and community members to pursue higher education.

Parents also espoused core values which served their children well in the college setting. Respect for self and others was one such value that a number of the parents articulated. This value served as a form of non-traditional support which would validate their children's educational efforts. In addition, this study found that parents trust the institution to provide support for their children.

This study also found limited attempts by University officials in making contact with Latino parents. A number of parents, in fact, contrasted their active involvement in their children's K-12 years with the very limited opportunities to be involved—or even informed—about what was happening in their children's educational lives at the University. These comments however, were more observations than criticisms. At least in the interviews conducted for this study, the parents seemed positive about the University, even as they acknowledged limited efforts by the University to involve them. Additionally, the cross-case analysis revealed that parents used these non-traditional support strategies more frequently with their children in the upper academic years than they did with them in the first two academic years.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to expand the research and provide useful information centering on the role parental support plays in the retention of Latino students in higher education and to determine if parental levels of support and involvement in higher education was similar to or differed from those reported in the rather extensive body of knowledge regarding Latino parental support during the K-12 years. This section compares findings to existing theory about what is needed for students to succeed in college.

### **This Study's Results: Linking Validation Theory to Promoting Student Success in College**

Rendón's Validation Theory (1994) conceptualizes the foundational elements necessary to validate students' educational experiences in college. The theory includes important elements which validate, enable, confirm, and support students' interactions in

and out of the classroom (Rendón, 1994). The theory conceptualizes and acknowledges validation outside of the classroom by examining external programs and services such as college and university student support services, campus climate, campus personnel (such as academic advisors and counselors), as well as the student's peer relationships, significant others, parents, and other family members serving as "validation agents" (Rendón, 1994). Rendón's Validation Theory further posits that validating agents must take the initiative to validate the student's experience. This is critical for university personnel to understand the power that they have as educators and parents in becoming validating agents and establishing a validating culture for students at home and on campus by understanding the six elements of support:

- 1) Agents initiate contact (faculty, counselors, advisors, peers, significant others, parents, and siblings).
- 2) When validation is present, students feel capable of learning and reinforces their self worth.
- 3) Validation is a pre-requisite to student development; meaning that after students feel validated they are more likely to feel confident and become involved
- 4) Validation can occur in and out of the classroom.
- 5) Validation is a developmental process as opposed to an end in itself.
- 6) Validation is especially needed early in the student's college experience.

A contrasting theory to Rendón's is that of Astin's Theory of Involvement has been widely used and implemented on college campuses which embraces the dominant culture of the independent eighteen year old. Thus, Astin's theory states that, for students



to be successful, they must take the initiative to get involved. Astin's theory removed the responsibility of creating a validating campus culture from the institution by placing the responsibility on the students (Astin, 2004). Thus, involvement in student organizations or activities is the responsibility of the student to take initiative and not the institution's responsibility to recruit students and examine campus climate issues. On the other hand, Rendón's Validation Theory proposes that educators reach out to the student and validate their educational experience (which helps students of color acknowledge their self-worth for their educational pursuits) (Rendón, 1994).

### **A Comparison of This Study's Results with Findings about Parental Support during the K-12 Years**

The findings of this study revealed that parental support for these participants continued throughout the university experience for their children. Equally important, findings reveal that the manner in which parents engage in demonstrating support at the university level is substantially different than at the K-12 level. For instance, traditional parental support at the K-12 reported parents establishing a daily routines with children, providing children a time and a quiet place to study, helping children with academic subjects, establishing strict bed and eating times, limiting time watching television, monitoring out-of-school activities, supporting special talents, celebrating successes, and communicating regularly with teachers (Henderson and Berla, 1995).

The limited literature on parental support in higher education suggests that parents with cultural capital become more involved in their child's education (Sheldon, 2002). That is families with cultural capital who possess knowledge about the typical four-year public institutions already know the rules and how to navigate successfully through the

educational process (Payne, 1996; Tierney, 2002). For instance, helicopter parents come from middle- to high-income socio-economic status; most of these parents have formal education and have an understanding of how the educational system operates (White, 2005). Thus, they use this knowledge to benefit their children's educational experience by actively advocating and/or demanding services for their children (Payne, 1996; Tierney, 2002).

Interestingly enough in this study parents' limited systemic knowledge did not prevent them from becoming involved in their children's education. Parents demonstrated non-traditional ways of showing support by reaffirming and validating their children's educational experiences through interpersonal validation outside the classroom. Parents, in essence, became validating agents (Réndon, 1994) in their children's educational process due to their public and private expressions of pride for their children's educational accomplishments.

### **Interpersonal Validation: Parental Interest and Pride in Their Children's Education**

Parents demonstrated interpersonal validation (Réndon, 1994) by consistently inquiring about and engaging in conversation with their children about their experience at the university. Parents validated their children's self-worth by demonstrating pride and talking to others about their children's college attendance, which seemed to fuel their children's determination to succeed. The parents utilized this pride to convey personal stories of resiliency and success about their children to friends, family, and others, which directly contributed to the children adjusting socially in college. For example, Lucy (the

only interview conducted in English) conveys how parents used pride as a source of support for their children. She said,

I got a divorce and then I got married again. No more kids; I was done. Actually, I was done with my first one and then Jaime came along and he's a big blessing. Just supporting him and, um, he works very hard. He's a great saver and I tried to save money to get him a car and he said, "No, I'm gonna work and I'm gonna buy my own car," and he did. He's accomplished everything that he has set out to do, yeah. I am so proud of him. Right now we are waiting for graduation and moving on to better things. And he's encouraging his nephews a lot. I do too. I always tell them about Jaime and how far he has gotten and I use his experience as an example of what they can do if they work hard.

Lucy passionately expresses the pride she has for the determination and resiliency her son has demonstrated in his academic achievement. While Lucy and her family endured challenging economic times, Lucy maintained an optimistic and hopeful outlook for their future by modeling resiliency thus demonstrating to her son the importance of resiliency who followed his mother's lead.

This parental pride fueled by resiliency for low-income parents is not new. For instance, Usrey (2009) conducted a study with parents of low-income, high-achieving students in elementary school and found that parents' advice for their children included stories of resiliency, which undoubtedly fueled their pride. This study's findings reinforce current literature by illuminating a similar common thread of parental pride fueled by experiences of overcoming barriers. For example, Baker and Stevenson (1986) described lower socio-economic parents as "encouragers, helpers, and counselors" to their K-12 children, and while they are unable to help in specific academic subjects, parents are constantly aware of their children's needs and encourage them at home.

Similarly, in this study, parents had limited understanding of their children's academic subjects and knowledge of the higher educational system, but they were keenly

aware of their children's needs and supported their children by validating their children's educational experiences using core values they taught them early in life (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Parents also used their resiliency of overcoming barriers to fuel pride for their children and demonstrate and exhibit this pride for their children with family and friends, which directly validated their children's self-worth and determination to succeed in college. Therefore, the pride that the Latino parents in this study demonstrate for their children continues throughout K-12 and potentially heightened at the university level, given that their children are, more often than not, the first in their family to attend college.

### **Validation of Self-Respect and Respect for Others**

A second theme of self-respect and respect for others emerged. Parents ingrained the core value of self-respect and the respect for others as foundational to help them navigate through life's challenges. Dillon (1995) defines respect as having respect for oneself, having a regard for one's character, and having a worthy self-esteem. According to Dillon, self-respect is an ongoing struggle for children. Dillon proposes that each person holds the key to his or her own self-respect; however, not everyone experiences the level of parental support which was given by these parents for their children. In life, individuals need to develop a sense of self-respect for themselves in order to make decisions for themselves and be able to survive in the world (Dillon, 1995). However, they need parental love and support for their goals and dreams.

Delgado-Gaitan (2004), in her research with Latino families, found that the term "respect" has a broader meaning. In other words, respect holds a dual role: (a) "parental authority and respect are highly valued and considered a form of love" (p. 3), and (b)

demonstrating respect for self and others is used as a measure of how well parents educate their children at home. Thus, if children respect familial roles (parental roles, elder and younger sibling roles, extended family roles and authority), they have achieved *respeto* (respect) for themselves and others and are well-educated (Valdez, 1996).

Although the core value of respect used as a force to navigate through life's challenges seems unique, respect in general is also embedded in the Latino culture. Clutter and Nieto (2008) note that the Latino culture embeds respect in etiquette when addressing others. Thus, the theme of respect is of no surprise in the Latino culture in general. For instance, Latinos have two forms of addressing individuals. The formal "*usted*" and the informal "*tu*" speaks to the culturally ingrained respect for others of many Latino families. Referring to someone as *usted* is a sign of respect, and is used until the individual has given permission to be addressed informally as *tu*.

Correspondingly, parents in this study embrace respect for self and others. Parents spoke of respect for self, for each other, and respect for others as a type of support for the educational goals of their children. To these parents, self-respect is a sign of respect for their children's self-growth and development as human beings. Respect surfaced as the core and fundamental value parents instilled in their children, especially when giving them advice. For instance, Luis' advice to his son was to respect self and others; he said,

I tell him to behave and to have self-respect and respect for others, peers, elderly, I mean everyone; I tell him to be humble with everyone that surrounds you, at work, and wherever you go give respect to all individuals.

Parents acknowledged their children's educational hard work by providing them with the foundational core value of self-respect and respect for others, which brought to

fruition a sense of emotional cognitive developmental security in their children—which, in turn fueled their determination to succeed.

Parents believed that they prepared their children to meet life's challenges with this core value of self-respect and the respect of others. By teaching their children to respect self and others as a core value, the parents believed that this value would be foundational in helping them to pursue their goals and build relationships which would carry them through life experiences successfully.

What was interesting—and somewhat surprising—in this study was how parents used respect as a core value to motivate their children to persist in college during trying times. Parents would often remind their children about this core value, especially when their children seemed troubled about continuing in their studies, by reminding them to continue to take on life's challenges as a sign of respect to themselves and finishing what they set out to do. Parents used the core value of self-respect and respect of others as a source of encouragement for their children, which seems to demonstrate a unique non-traditional approach in supporting their children's' educational goals and dreams.

### **Parental Perceptions of Institutional Support for Them**

This study also illuminates the degree to which the institution has not fully implemented strategies to build university/family partnerships with Latino families. The University has a limited understanding view of how to develop relationships with students' respective families and how to build family/university partnerships. Parents' experience with the University revealed that little to no communication was established with parents.

Despite this lack of communication with parents, parents clearly signaled that they wanted to learn more about how the system operates. All parents were interested and invested in learning more about the higher-education process. However, some parents believed their limited knowledge of the higher educational system that was manifested by their limited English skills, was perhaps deemed irrelevant by the institution. This contributed to their insecurities and hence became reluctant in initiating contact with the university themselves. Thus, the support for these parents from the institution is practically non-existent.

However, despite the minimal interactions with the University, parents trusted, respected and were grateful of the perceived support the University gives their children. Parents trusted that the University personnel would guide and provide the necessary support for their children. These findings provide higher education officials with a glimpse of the Latino parental support experience and offer recommendations in reaching out to these families.

### **Implications for Policy Makers and Practitioners**

This study reveals that parents supported their children in non-traditional ways. Parents were interested and committed to building relationships with the University despite their limited understanding of the higher educational system. For instance, Hector, a parent of the freshmen in college, wanted to get involved as he had previously done in K-12, but did not know how to go about finding the information or making contact with University officials. In addition, since the university had since he never communicated with him directly, he perceived his knowledge as irrelevant in higher education. He also indicated that advocating and supporting parents to begin

understanding the educational system was his passion, but when it came to higher education, he found no venue for information about how he could get involved. Hector's wish was to gain more knowledge so that he could further support his son in higher education. He hoped that informational programs could also be conducted in Spanish so he could learn how to support his son and also provide support other parents.

On the other hand, Maria, mother of a senior in college, was willing to also help her daughter indirectly; she was willing to help set up tables or to decorate for events. To her, this would demonstrate, to a greater extent to her daughter, that she was involved and supportive of her educational dreams. Maria shared how she was aware that her daughter was receiving support from University programs yet did not specifically understand the type of support these programs provided to her daughter. Assisting with events would validate her interest in her daughter's education and perhaps familiarize her with support programs at the university.

While most parents work one or two jobs and have limited time on their hands, their commitment to building relationships with the University is evident and noteworthy. Acknowledging parents' interest and commitment to ensure their children are supported on campus would be an important endeavor for university programs to seize. Building family/university partnerships is critical and could be manifested in several ways. One way would be to design a Parent Summer Institute. A Parent Summer Institute would validate parents' role as a key contribution in the educational process of their children. The Parent Summer Institute would provide seminars for parents on a variety of topics centering on understanding the educational pipeline and higher-education experience. A Parent Summer Institute would also offer ideas of how universities can provide support



for them by involving parents in the creation of the agenda. In other words, the institute would validate the parents' knowledge systems and ideas as a key foundational principle in building family-university partnership. Additionally, having parents take the lead in creating the agenda would help them to become agents of change and empower them by demystifying the university process. Providing informational seminars on the programmatic and systemic functions of the university would enhance the parents' knowledge on understanding higher education. This would, in turn, provide the parents with additional knowledge on how to support their children through graduation. Table 5 illustrates a potential five-weekend (Saturday morning) seminar schedule and topics to consider for the Latino Parent Summer Institute.

Table 5

*Proposed Parent Summer Institute Seminar Schedule*

<p><b>Week 1: Transitional Issues</b></p> <p><i>Example:</i> Identify and address the high-school-to-university transitional issues faced by parents and their children during the initial college experience (such as understanding university academic expectations, meeting new peers, and understanding how to access student services). Also, explaining to parents the technical aspects of how the university operates like course and degree selections, social support, academic support, student organizations and even how to apply for work-study jobs on campus.</p>
<p><b>Week 2: Non-traditional Support Strategies</b></p> <p><i>Example:</i> Reiterating the importance of continuing to validate their children's educational experience by having parents share their forms of non-traditional support and sharing those successful strategies with other parents.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Building on the cultural theme of pride for their children being the first in their family to attend college, discuss ways to use this validation during key challenges and milestones in the student's educational experience.</p>
<p><b>Week 3: Student Services/Governing Communication Systems</b></p> <p><i>Example:</i> Providing information about how campus student services differ from the K-12 environment so parents can refer children for assistance.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Explaining the distinctions in governing communication systems and laws of K-12 vs. Higher Education, such as specific workshop training on Family Educational Rights &amp; Privacy Act (FERPA)<sup>11</sup> so parents better understand the reasons for institutions not sharing direct academic record information.</p>
<p><b>Week 4: Getting Involved</b></p> <p><i>Example:</i> Inviting parents like Hector to become involved in a Parent Advisory Council.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Recruiting parents who go through this training to serve as role models who can later participate in the trainings of new parents.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Including classroom visits on campus tours in this training for parents like Rosa who desire to see the classrooms.</p>
<p><b>Week 5: Acknowledging Parental Involvement through Incentives</b></p> <p><i>Example:</i> Providing parental incentives such as certification for the attendance of all workshops and other awards such as full attendance or outstanding class/workshop performance, etc.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> Holding a program completion ceremony to acknowledge their accomplishments and invite key campus constituents to acknowledge their involvement.</p>

<sup>11</sup> The federal government created the Educational Rights and Privacy Act 1974 for protection of student records.

### **Reinforcing Respect throughout the Educational Journey**

As an upper-division retention strategy, practitioners can tap into the core value of respect by developing parental informational workshops (conducted in the parent's native language) during the student's junior and senior years as parents indicated that their children seemed to be discouraged. College officials can design workshops for students with a theme of respect as a reminder to them to keep their promise and to finish their goals. This would reinforce the parental non-traditional support of the core value of respect which motivated them to continue in their education. Another retention strategy would be to validate the students' academic progress at the end of each semester. For instance, students would receive a congratulating email from the advising team or even the Dean after successfully completing the academic term. Currently, students are acknowledged only when placed on the Dean's list yet this new retention strategy would be helpful to acknowledge students academic effort and reinforce respecting their self worth and family commitments to obtain educational goals.

### **Addressing the Parents' Silent Higher Education Experience**

Higher education officials historically organize university programs embracing identity developmental frameworks (Erikson, 1968) that reinforce traditional notions of independence and adulthood; Meaning, students are adults, and hence, are independent and require minimal, if any, familial support. For Latinos, adulthood symbolizes a transition where one seeks independence—but in relation to family and extended family members (Quijada & Alvarez, 2006). In fact, research suggests that Latino students are more relational in their developmental trajectories (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). For

example, parents of this study reinforced how these traditional notions of adulthood get manifested at the university level.

The findings of the document analysis revealed that the communication in Spanish to parents is limited to non-existent. This lack of communication with the parents was referred to as the “silent experience” because parents stated communication ended immediately after high school, despite parents’ a strong interest in learning how the university system operates and an interest in involving themselves. For example, Rosa, mother of a freshman in college, shared her interest in getting a tour of the college campus that would include seeing classrooms so she could see where her son was going to be attending classes. Developing a family/university partnership would enhance relationships with Latino families and demystify the unknown university experience. Thus, making language accommodations for parents during orientation and other programs would prove fruitful. In addition, recording telephone messages into the university’s main line with general information in their native language regarding upcoming programs involving parents would further enhance a family/ university partnership.

Some parents shared how having the knowledge and information about potential involvement could help them better understand their own support efforts for their children in higher education. Marichu shared how she felt honored when she received high school information in her native language. She said, “When I received letters from my son’s school in Spanish, I liked it and I kept myself informed and felt important.” Enhancing the type of communication with parents validates parents’ and their respective supportive roles with their children.

This welcoming gesture of communicating in the parents' native language would be the beginning of forming institutional partnership with Latino parents. Doing so will validate parental support efforts which will motivate parents to continue to support their children and begin to demystify the silent higher education experience.

The communication and the cultural gap moves institutions of higher education to consider a variety of ways to engage Latino parents in as many ways as is possible. As Delgado-Gaitan (2004) eloquently noted, "Traditional values and practices are transmitted in families that maintain strong ties. Schools can tap these values." (p. 3).

### **Implications for Future Research**

Future research to build on this study would be to implement a mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative approach, recruit a larger sample of parents, and include other HSIs to determine if non-traditional levels of support differ by region served and institution type. In addition, including program staff and campus administrators to get their views on how to approach a partnership with Latino parents could shed more light on how best to support Latino parents.

Expanding this study's sample to include students would be another important point. In the few studies identified regarding Latino parental support at the university level, students noted parents' lack of knowledge of the educational system and suggested that this lack of knowledge was a barrier to their parents helping them negotiate the higher education environment (Ceballo, 2004). Other studies revealed that students reported parental support as undoubtedly key in their educational experience, but neglected to explain specific actions the parents took to demonstrate their support (Hernandez, 2000). Thus, building on this present study, future research can also include

data from both student and parents to compare and contrast the students' perceptions of parental support to those of the parents to determine if any differences and/or overlaps of perceived non-traditional support efforts exist.

Another approach to build on this study would be to examine parental non-traditional support through the lens of students' identity stages to determine at which levels in the student's educational experience is parental non-traditional support most needed and useful. For instance, Identity Development Model for Latinos by Torrez (1999) focuses identity development of first- and second-generation freshmen students and posits that there is a difference in how students move through the identity process based on familial background, acculturation, and the importance parents place on country of origin. Also, there may differences in gender, socio-economic status, and other identities which influence development. Future research can focus on enhancing our understanding of how parental support is presented (a) to further impact retention efforts which will enhance the number of Latinos persisting through the entire educational pipeline (from pre-Kindergarten through postgraduate study); and (b) build on the non-traditional support parents give their children. Therefore, future studies regarding parental involvement may inform at what complex stage of identity development is parental non-traditional support effective or ineffective.

The non-traditional support efforts used by these parents for the upper-division college years seemed to differ from the lower-division years; this may potentially indicate a variety of variables are at play. For instance, many current programmatic efforts on college campuses nationwide are geared to first-year students in an effort to address the high attrition of first-year students. In addition, a growing body of research is also

focused on the second year experience and retention. This could mean less programs and efforts aimed at the upper-division years. However, the findings could also indicate that the intensity of the non-traditional support efforts given by these parents during the upper-division years perhaps has to do with parental styles. Studies on parental styles have documented the impact on student achievement and have begun to inform how a parents styles (authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian) impact student achievement in college. For instance, Turner, Chandler, & Heffer (2009) recruited a sample of 415 freshman from diverse backgrounds at a predominately White college and found that the parental style of authoritative contributed to the academic success of students. The researchers described authoritative parents as having a combination of permissiveness and authoritative characteristics; permissive as more loosely structured boundaries with the student, and the authoritarian as “laying down the law” for everything the parent demands.

These studies are important as they begin informing practitioners about correlations of type of parental style and specific dimensions of parental involvement and its impact in student development and success. Further research in identifying specific variables of parental support based on parental style may be useful for better understanding Latino parents’ non-traditional support of their children in higher education.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study reported in this dissertation suggests that, at least for the seven parents that participated, the value that Latinos place in education and the support they provide to their children during the K-12 years also exists during the higher

education years. The study also suggests, however, that Latino parents have more difficulty connecting with higher education institutions. Parents in this study continue to value education but are unfamiliar with the educational process due to language barriers and socio-economic status. Also, limited communication from the institution contributes to parents' perception about the institution deeming their parental role in higher education as unimportant. Most of the parents in this study had to work two jobs, which limited the time available for direct involvement. However, they are willing to make further sacrifices by having a better understanding of the type of support needed and the type of activities or involvement to further support their children's educational experience.

In general, educators have a point of agreement which is that parents matter in the lives of their student (Cohen & Halsey, 2006). How the institution structures that encouragement and communication will vary from institution to institution. Equally important is how the various services within the institution deliver their communicative responses to Latino parents. The goal of tapping into parental support for Latinos in higher education is to better understand and support Latino students in their educational experience—so that experience leads to graduation. As noted in the parental involvement literature, informed and involved parents are more likely to impact a positive experience at college for their children (Cohen & Halsey, 2006). Not only will the individual students themselves benefit, but Latino parents' non-traditional support efforts will be acknowledged, valued, and respected as a key contribution to Latino student retention.



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## APPENDICES

Appendix A  
Letter Granting Access

March 30, 2010

Dear Lorena,

In response to your inquiry regarding research on parental involvement of Latino Summer Bridge students, I'm pleased to inform you that we welcome your research on the Summer Bridge Program. As per our conversations, I have designated the EOP Counselor/Summer Bridge Coordinator to mail your letter to the parents of Summer Bridge students inviting them to participate in the research project. Please provide me with a copy of the letter invitation at Craven Hall 4100C. Also, include your direct contact information on your invitation so that parent volunteers can contact you directly.

As we agreed, the names of the selected parents will be kept confidential. Therefore, my staff will send the letter to all summer bridge program participants over the past four years. This list of SB current enrolled participants will be sent to approximately 85 parents. You will provide parents with your contact information. Once parents accept to participate in your study, they will contact you directly and volunteer their personal information themselves.

Lastly, you can stop by my office and pick up Summer Bridge related materials such as the student expectations, the program history, and the year- end report from last year and any other years you might want to use. There is a file in the store room with various hard copies of brochures and reports used over the past five years. I will inform the receptionist that you will be accessing this file cabinet at your convenience. If you plan to check these material out of the office, please work with the receptionist on identifying a time and date to do this.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

EOP Director

Copy: EOP/Summer Bridge Counselor



Appendix B  
Invitation to Participate

**(in English)**

Dear Parents,

This letter invites you to participate in a research project that I will be conducting in order to complete my doctoral dissertation through the University of San Diego. The purpose of the study is to gain greater understanding of how parents are involved in their son/daughter's education. I will be tape recording the interviews in order to capture all of your responses. All participants remain anonymous. Some of the questions that you may be asked during the interview are noted below:

- 1) Tell me about your experiences with your involvement in your son/daughter's education.
- 2) Tell me what you do to help your son/daughter in school.
- 3) What experiences have you had in working with university personnel?
- 4) Has your involvement in your son/daughter's education helped him/her to do better in school?
- 5) What would you tell other Latino parents about involvement in the university?

I estimate that the interview will take about one hour of your time in a place that is convenient for you. If you are interested in participating, please contact me at (760) 496-4290 to inform me of your willingness to participate in this study.

Respectfully,

Lorena Meza  
University of San Diego Doctoral Student

(in Spanish)

*Estimado Padre(s),*

*Por medio de esta carta les invito a participar en una investigación que estaré haciendo para poder terminar mis estudios doctorales en la Universidad de San Diego. La meta de esta investigación es para poder entender más a fondo en que forma participan los padres de familia en la educación de sus hijos/hijas. Si acepta (n) participar yo estaré grabando la conversación para poder captar sus respuestas. Toda su información es estrictamente confidencial y sus nombres se mantendrán anónimos. Algunas de las preguntas que les hare son las siguientes:*

- 1) ¿Digame de sus experiencias en la involucración de la educación de tu hijo/hija?*
- 2) ¿En qué forma ayuda a su hijo/hija en la escuela?*
- 3) ¿Qué experiencias ha tenido con los oficiales o personal de la universidad?*
- 4) ¿Qué le diría a otras familias Latinas sobre la involucración en la universidad?*

*Si desea participar, por favor llámame al (760) 496-4290 y nos pondremos de acuerdo para la entrevista. Estimo que la entrevista durara solo una hora de tu tiempo.*

*Muchísimas gracias por considerar mi invitación.*

*Respetuosamente,*

*Lorena Meza*

*Universidad de San Diego*

## Appendix C

### Interview Guide

**(in English)**

- Question 1. Tell me about your son/daughter and their decision to go to college.
- Question 2. How has the decision to go to college affected your family?
- Question 3. Please share your ideas about how you influence your son/daughter with regard to his/her schooling?
- Question 4. What are some of the ways that school staff helps Latino families to participate in the college experience?
- Question 5. Do you remember a time when you interacted with University staff that left you a positive or negative impression?
- Question 6. What is your relationship with instructors? Summer Bridge Coordinators or any other University staff?
- Question 7. Do you know of any programs or services that the University provides for Latino families?
- Question 8. What's your opinion about those services or programs? In what ways do you think they could be helpful for parents?
- Question 9. What are some ways that Latino families can contribute to schools?
- Question 10. What do you think should be the ideal relation between the school and the Latino parents?

**(in Spanish)**

- Pregunta 1. Platíqueme de su hijo/hija y su decisión de ir al colegio.
- Pregunta 2. ¿Cómo ha afectado a la familia esta decisión?
- Pregunta 3. ¿Cuáles son sus ideas de cómo influye usted en la educación de su hijo/hija?
- Pregunta 4. ¿Cuáles son algunas formas en que el personal escolar puede ayudar a las familias Latinas a que se involucren en la universidad?
- Pregunta 5. ¿Tiene alguna experiencia con empleados de la universidad que le haya dejado un impacto positivo o negativo con respecto a su interés por involucrarse?
- Pregunta 6. ¿Cuál es su relación con maestros, coordinador(a) de Summer Bridge, personal de la oficina, o alguna otra persona?
- Pregunta 7. ¿Sabe de programas o servicios que la Universidad provee para las familias Latinas?
- Pregunta 8. ¿Cuál es su opinión acerca de esos servicios o programas que ha recibido?  
¿Cómo cree que puedan ser de ayuda para los padres Latinos?
- Pregunta 9. ¿Hay alguien en su familia que le interese involucrarse en actividades en la Universidad?
- Pregunta 10. ¿Cómo cree usted que debe ser la relación entre la universidad y padres Latinos?

Appendix D  
Letter #2: For Parents Who Volunteered but Were Not Selected

**(in English)**

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your response and your willingness to participate in the research on the Latino parental involvement. Given the number of parents volunteering to participate, I have more volunteers than the study can accommodate at this time. I will keep your contact information should space become available, or if further study is conducted in the near future. I sincerely appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Lorena Meza  
Doctoral Student  
School of Leadership and Education Sciences  
University of San Diego



**(in Spanish)**

*Estimados Padres,*

*Muchas gracias por su respuesta y buena voluntad en participar en esta investigación sobre la involucración de los padres en la educación de sus hijos/hijas. Varios padres voluntarios respondieron y tengo muchos más voluntarios de los que puedo acomodar en la investigación. Guardare su información en caso de que tenga lugar en el futuro o si otro estudio similar se presenta en el futuro.*

*Agradezco sinceramente su interés en esta investigación.*

*Lorena Meza  
Estudiante Doctoral  
Universidad de San Diego*