

## (Re)considering the Role *Familismo* Plays in Latina/o High School Students' College Choices

Melissa A. Martinez  
Texas State University  
mm224@txstate.edu

---

*This qualitative study examines the role familismo (Marín & Marín, 1991) played in 20 Latina/o high school seniors' college choices. Familismo is the tendency to hold the wants and needs of family in higher regard than one's own and has been considered a common trait of Latina/o families. Interviews with students and secondary school counselors revealed this trait may be a common value upheld by Latina/o families but is also a reflection of structural forces outside the family unit. Findings highlight ways students negotiated the options of attending a university close to home to benefit from familial support and/or financially contribute to the family; leaving the region for college in order to ensure a "better life" for themselves and their families; or compromising by beginning at a regional institution and later transferring to another university. High school personnel, and others assisting Latina/os with their college choices should consider such findings.*

---

One in four K-12 students enrolled in America's public schools today is Latina/o<sup>1</sup> (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Hispanic enrollment increased from "5.1 to 12.1 million students, and the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic increased from 12 to 23 percent" from 1990 to 2010 alone (Aud et al., 2012, p. 26). With this increasing enrollment, one might expect that greater numbers of Latina/o students would also be continuing their education beyond high school. However, this is not necessarily the case when considering the number of Latina/o students that successfully complete high school and immediately enroll in either a two- or four-year college. From 1975 to 2010, for instance, college enrollment rates for White, Black, and Asian students who completed high school increased respectively from 51% to 70%, 43% to 66%, and 80% to 88% (Aud et al., 2012). Yet the college enrollment rate for Latina/o high school completers remained at approximately 60% (Aud et al., 2012).

Enrolling in college, however, does not necessarily equate with college completion. Data from 2004 indicates that among first-time, full-time students seeking a bachelor's degree only 50% of Latina/os graduated within 6 years (Aud et al., 2012). This was a lower rate than Asian/Pacific Islanders (69%) and White students (62%), although higher than the completion rate for Black (39%) and American Indian/Alaska Native students (39%). It is also important to note that individuals of Mexican descent comprise the largest population (2.8 million in 2007) within the Latina/o community, yet

---

<sup>1</sup> Latina/o and Hispanic are used here interchangeably and refer to individuals of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, or Dominican descent, or other persons that identify as Latina/o/Hispanic.

they have the second lowest educational attainment rates at 8.5%, with the lowest being Salvadorans at 7.8% (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). This percentage reflects the individuals of Mexican descent (native and foreign-born) between the ages of 25 to 29 that had at least a bachelor's degree in 2007 (Aud et al., 2010). Considering these statistics, there remains a need to further examine issues of college access and choice for Latina/os. Moreover, greater attention to Latina/os of Mexican descent is especially warranted given that they comprise the majority within this community yet have one of the lowest educational attainment rates.

When considering the college choice process in particular, researchers (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Perna, 2006) have found that it is complex and multi-dimensional in nature. It consists of students developing college aspirations, considering possible institutions to attend, and then making a decision on where to attend. This is all within the context of students' economic backgrounds, socio-cultural characteristics, and the cultural and social capital (Perna, 2006) available to them. Furthermore, the secondary school, community, and higher education context and social, economic, and policy environment that students inhabit also influence college choice. As Latina/o students begin the college choice process (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987), they often rely on multiple sources for information, guidance, and assistance. Latina/o parents particularly play a key role in this process in developing and supporting students' college aspirations (Alvarez, 2010; Ceja, 2001, 2004, 2006; Gándara, 1995; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2006; Kiyama, 2011; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). Siblings have also been noted as role models and direct sources of college information (Alvarez, 2010; Ceja, 2006; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002).

Within the last twenty years, critical scholars doing work on the education of Latina/o students have stressed how parents and *familia* (family) value and significantly contribute to their children's education (Auerbach, 2007; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; González, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendón, Gonzales, & Amanti, 1995; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Valencia & Black, 2002; Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992). They have purposefully taken an asset-based approach in considering the ways that Latina/o families shape and impact their children's educational experiences and trajectories, as opposed to a deficit view that blames Latina/o families and culture for the gaps in educational attainment among Latina/o students (Valencia & Black, 2002). In particular, the familial bonds and cultural beliefs and traditions of many Latina/o families can be sources of strength for students during the college choice process.

Yet some students can experience tension in choosing what college to attend when it seems that their own college aspirations conflict with their cultural and familial beliefs and practices (Ceja, 2001; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). However, it is important to consider how some of the values and/or practices of Latina/o families are constructed by forces outside the family unit (Baca Zinn, 1994). Utilizing a feminist approach, Baca Zinn's (1994) work on racial/ethnic minority families noted that "many of the [racial/ethnic] minority family patterns deemed 'incorrect' by journalists, scholars, and policymakers are logical life choices in a society of limited social opportunities" (p. 24). This should be taken into account in the context of Latina/o students' college choices and the role that *familismo*, or the tendency to hold the wants and needs of family in higher regard than one's own (Marín & Marín, 1991), plays in this process.

Historically for instance, Latina/o families have been considered to be more collectivist in nature, in that they place greater value on being members of a community and family. This often results in higher levels of interdependence, reciprocity,

mutual empathy, in-group trust, and a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of other in-group members (Marín & Triandis, 1985 as cited in Marín & Marín, 1991). At the same time, collectivism also lends itself to greater conformity and the ability to be readily influenced by others. This stands in contrast to the “individualistic, competitive, achievement-oriented cultures of the nonminority groups in the United States” (Marín & Marín, 1991, p. 11). Yet, in light of Baca Zinn’s (1994) arguments, it is important to consider how the ways in which Latina/o families have been historically marginalized in society might account for their increased tendency to rely on others within the family or cultural group. This may help explain why Latina/o students are more likely than their non-Latina/o counterparts to contend with the familial expectations of attending a postsecondary institution that is more affordable or closer to home so that they might continue to actively participate in and contribute to family life, as well as rely on family for emotional guidance and support (Tornatzky, Lee, Mejía, & Tarant, 2003).

Research examining the role that family plays on Latina/o high school students’ college choice process is growing (Alvarez, 2010; Ceja, 2001, 2004, 2006; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2006; Kiyama, 2010, 2011; Perez & McDonough, 2008; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006; Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002) but additional scholarship is still needed given the intricacies of this process. Furthermore, few studies, like that of Alvarez (2010), utilize the notion of *familismo* as a framework to examine Latina/o college choice, or interrogate the negotiation process of Latina/o students in choosing to attend an institution that is closer to home or more affordable, like Tornatzky, et al.’s (2003) research. This study draws on the notion of *familismo* to examine qualitative interview data with 20 Latina/o high school seniors, all specifically of Mexican descent<sup>2</sup>, and four secondary school counselors to specifically (re)consider how students negotiated their college choice process in the midst of familial beliefs, expectations, and traditions that at times may have contradicted their individual postsecondary aspirations.

### **Role of Family in Latina/o College Choice**

Within the college choice literature, family members have been considered as key sources of social capital (social informational resources and networks) for Latina/o students by providing tangible college information as well as guidance (Ceja, 2001; 2004, 2006; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). For instance, in Gándara’s (1995) seminal case study of high-achieving, low-income Mexican Americans, family played a key role in developing students’ college aspirations through a “culture of possibility” (p. 112). Ceja (2004) also noted how the daily struggles of Chicana college students’ parents were positive, indirect influences on students’ aspirations, as were parents’ direct words of encouragement. This is consistent with findings from Auerbach’s (2006) ethnographic case study at a high school in the Los Angeles area where immigrant Latina/o parents exhibited support for their students’ college aspirations through *consejos* (narrative advice). The significance of *consejos* within Latina/o families and their role in conveying support and life-lessons within the context of education is well documented (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Fránquiz & Salazar, 2004; Valdés, 1996). More recently, a “funds of knowledge” approach has also helped highlight how Latino families form college ideologies that positively influence students’ college choice and access process, as well as future career aspirations (Kiyama, 2010, 2011; Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012).

---

<sup>2</sup> Mexican American, Chicana/o, and individuals of Mexican descent are used interchangeably. These terms refer to the largest subpopulation of individuals within the Latina/o community.

Other studies have helped identify how parents and siblings contribute to or shape Latina/o students' college choice process. Once again, Ceja (2001, 2006) found that Latina/o parents were often more able to support Chicanas' college choice process through emotional or financial means rather than direct assistance because of parents' lack of familiarity with the specifics of what the process entails. Alternatively, older siblings who had gone through the college choice process served as key sources of college information and guidance. It is Latina/o parents' limited familiarity with the college choice process that Ceja (2001) suggested contributed to the concerns that the Chicanas and their parents in his study shared in regards to paying for college and choosing an institution far from home. He described how leaving home for college was a particularly controversial issue for some Chicanas, one that some were able to negotiate. At the same time, when parents were informed of financial aid and the benefits of living on a college campus, parents were more accepting of this option.

Rosas and Hamrick (2002) found results similar to Ceja (2001) for Chicana college students in the Midwest. Their work also revealed the possible tensions that Latina/o students can experience as they navigate conflicting priorities and expectations between their more collectivistic Latina/o families and the more individualistic values of the U.S. educational system. For instance, a majority of the Chicanas' family members acknowledged the importance of the individualistic and independent values upheld within American schools and society, yet within the family, reciprocity remained a higher priority. Ultimately, almost all Chicanas in the study fared well negotiating this apparent tension between collectivism and individualism because students did not consider independence and reciprocity as mutually exclusive. Instead, students viewed higher education as a means to more aptly provide and contribute to their families and communities. Ceja's (2001) and Rosas and Hamrick's (2002) findings are particularly noteworthy in the context of this study, as I hope to extend such research to consider how or whether the negotiation process that Latina/o students experienced reflected an adherence to *familismo*, while at the same time interrogating how *familismo* among Latina/os is itself a characteristic shaped by societal forces outside the family unit (Baca Zinn, 1994).

In an effort to further gauge the issue of leaving home among Latina/os, compared to their White counterparts, Tornatzky et al. (2003) quantitatively examined data from the National Survey of Recent College Graduates (NSRCG) for students who received degrees between 1994–1996. They examined whether gender roles and expectations impacted Latina/o students' decisions to stay or leave home for college, and/or attend less research-intensive institutions. They found that Latina/os were less likely to attend a research-intensive university compared to White students overall, and Latina females were more likely to attend a less research-intensive university that was closer to home than their male counterparts. Albeit, Tornatzky et al. (2003) admitted they used the limited proxy of graduating from an in-state (stay at home) university versus an out-of-state (leave home) university and were unable to account for the significance of cost or other qualitative influences on students' college choice using NSRCG data.

More recently, Alvarez (2010), like Kiyama (2010, 2011) and Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2012), urged the use of a familial approach to examine how Latina students and their families obtain and utilize information to navigate the college choice process. This familial approach was considered in light of the tendency for Latina/os to often make important decisions with the input of immediate, and at times extended, family members in mind (Marín & Marín, 1991). Alvarez

(2010) specifically utilized *familismo* as a conceptual framework within the more commonly known college choice process model purported by Hossler and Gallagher (1987), and identified three main stages in the process: predisposition, search, and choice. In her work with six Latinas and their parents, Alvarez did not find the sort of tension that existed for the Latinas in Ceja's (2001) and Rosas and Hamrick's (2002). However, Alvarez indicated that the families lived in a rural town in California that lacked a local four-year university but did have access to a local community college. Thus, it may be that families were more aware, and thus accepting, of the need to leave the region if students were to obtain at least a bachelor's degree. At the same time, the Latinas and parents in Alvarez's study did consider cost and affordability heavily in choosing a postsecondary institution, which often made the local community college a viable option. Overall, parents tended to rely on their daughters' judgment, trusting that students were choosing the institution that was the right fit for them. Given that Ceja (2001), Rosas and Hamrick (2002), and Alvarez (2010) solely examined the college choice experiences of Mexican American female students, additional studies are necessary to determine whether tensions related to staying and leaving home for college are similar for Mexican American males.

### ***Familismo* as a Conceptual Framework**

As this study set out to examine the cultural and familial influences on the college choice process (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987) of both female and male Latina/o students, and more specifically Latina/os of Mexican descent, *familismo* (familism) was adopted as a conceptual framework. In doing so, the findings will expand on previous college choice research (Alvarez, 2010). As Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, and Turner (2012) contended,

Familismo is theorized as a core cultural value that requires the individual to submit to a more collective, family-based form of decision-making, and responsibility for, and obligation to ensuring the well being of family members (both nuclear and extended). (p. 3)

*Familismo* is considered as one of the most prominent and significant cultural values among Hispanics (Marín & Marín, 1991). Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, Marín, and Perez-Stable Sabogal (1987), however, further distinguished between attitudinal and behavioral aspects of *familismo*:

Attitudinal aspects of Familism refer to the beliefs and attitudes Hispanics share regarding the extended and nuclear families, particularly in terms of feelings of loyalty, solidarity and reciprocity, while the behavioral components refer to behaviors associated with these feelings. (p. 399)

Thus, Sabogal et al. (1987) argued for the need to consider these distinctive aspects of *familismo* in research in order to avoid "counterintuitive findings" that do not consider how factors such as distance, accessibility to relatives or country of origin, or political and economic issues might explain why some Latina/os maintain strong familial attitudes but may not exhibit strong familial behaviors. In examining how differences in acculturation and socio-demographic characteristics (generation, nativity, place of growing up) might influence attitudinal familism, Sabogal et al. (1987) found that Hispanics who are more acculturated tend to value familism to a lesser degree than their less acculturated Hispanic counterparts. However, when compared to White non-Hispanics, Hispanics still demonstrated strong familial attitudes (Sabogal et al., 1987). They also found that there were three types of values associated with attitudinal familism among Hispanics. These related to the "perceived obligation to provide materials and emotional support to members of the

extended family,” “the perception of family members as reliable providers of help and support,” and “the tendency to perceive relatives as behavioral and attitudinal referents” (p. 401). Thus, these distinctions between attitudinal and behavioral familism, as well as the values associated with attitudinal familism, will be considered within the context of this study.

At the same time, this study also embraces the notion purported by Baca Zinn (1994), who contended that familism is not solely a cultural trait of many racial/ethnic families, but one that has been in part cultivated by the historical and systemic forces outside the family unit. In examining the structures and behaviors of racial/ethnic families from a feminist perspective, for instance, Baca Zinn (1994) explained how social and economic changes result in new family arrangements among racial/ethnic families as in the case of teenage parents, working mothers, or single-parent families. Baca Zinn (1994) argued:

Race plays an important role in the degree to which alternatives are deemed acceptable. When alternatives are associated with subordinate social categories, they are judged against ‘the traditional family’ and found to be deviant. Many alternative lifestyles that appear new to middle-class Americans are actually variant family patterns that have been traditional within Black and other ethnic communities for many generations. (p. 24)

The strong tendency of Latina/os and other racial/ethnic families to value familism could therefore be considered within the context of such alternative lifestyles. In addition, the following research questions guided this study: What role did *familismo* play in Latina/o students’ college choice process? How did Latina/o students negotiate any tensions related to *familismo* that arose in the midst of their college choice process?

### **Methodology**

This qualitative study was phenomenological (Creswell, 2013) in nature, drawing upon a constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The primary source of data were individual, semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2006) conducted in the fall of 2009 with 20 Latina/o high school seniors, specifically of Mexican descent, and four secondary school counselors at two traditional public high schools in South Texas. These interviews were previously examined utilizing a different theoretical framework and research questions. However, the data was purposefully re-examined for this study in light of a *familismo* conceptual framework and the previously stated research questions.

As the main purpose of this study was to understand the “essence” (Creswell, 2013) of students’ college choice processes in the context of their cultural and familial values and traditions, a phenomenological approach was taken. Specifically, I sought to understand and describe this college choice phenomenon in terms of “what” students were experiencing and “how” they were experiencing this process (Moustakas, 1994). Understanding students’ experiences was also based on a constructivist worldview in which I acknowledged that an objective truth does not exist, and thus I relied on the subjective meanings participants developed of their lived experiences which are socially, culturally, and historically situated (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Counselors’ narratives helped provide additional understanding of the students’ college choice processes, particularly since counselors could speak to their experiences in working with and assisting Latina/o students and families.

### *Role of the Researcher*

As a qualitative researcher with a constructivist worldview, it is also critical to acknowledge my own positionality (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). My positionality

was informed by my being a Mexican American woman from the South Texas Border with experience as a bilingual teacher and counselor in K-12 public schools. As such, my insider knowledge of the culture and community assisted me in gaining access to and building trust with participants. At the same time, I did not want my familiarity with and loyalty to South Texas to keep me from critically examining emerging themes in the data. Thus, I remained cognizant of this potential bias throughout the duration of the study.

#### *Sources of Data and Context of Study*

As previously mentioned, the primary data for this study was drawn from individual, semi-structured (Siedman, 2006) interviews that were conducted during the 2009–2010 academic school year with 20 high school seniors who self-identified as being of Mexican descent and attended two traditional public high schools in South Texas. The choice to conduct the study in South Texas was purposeful because it is a majority Latina/o region, and my intent was to examine the college choice process of Latina/o students, and, more specifically, students of Mexican descent. Within the district in which this study took place, there were five traditional high schools and one early college high school. I chose to recruit participants from two high schools, which I will call Mendez and Rios, because I had contacts at both sites who could assist me with gaining access to participants. I also assumed that in interviewing students at two high schools within the district, instead of one, there would be a greater variability among student participants, as each high school was located in a different geographic region within the district and city. It is also important to note that there is a four-year university and a community college in the city in which the study took place. There is also another four-year university and two community colleges within an hour of the city, also in the South Texas region.

At the time of the study, Mendez served 2,557 students and Rios served 3,184 students who were predominantly Latina/o, 94.9% and 97.3% respectively. A majority of students at both schools (89.4% at Mendez; 97.8% at Rios) were also considered “economically disadvantaged” in that they qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (Texas Education Agency, 2010). Ten students (5 males, 5 females) were recruited from each high school with the help of school counselors. The criteria to participate in the study was shared with the counselors, and required that students be: 1) seniors, 2) interested in attending a postsecondary institution after high school, and 3) of Mexican descent. School counselors were also urged to recommend participants that were from diverse academic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Prior to being interviewed, students were asked to complete a one-page questionnaire that provided additional demographic information for the study prior to the initial interview. Data indicated that all students were either 17 or 18 years of age and self-identified as Mexican American. Seven (35%) students were in the top 10% of their class. Twelve students were first-generation immigrants, in that both parents were born outside of the U.S., and eleven students (60%) were of first-generation college status. This latter designation was for students who had parent(s) or caretaker(s) who had a high school diploma or less (Choy, 2001; Nuñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

The counselors interviewed at both schools were female. Both counselors at Mendez identified as Latinas. Ms. Garza had eight years of counseling experience, while Ms. Marquez, the head counselor at Mendez, had at least three years counseling experience. At Rios, the higher education counselor, Ms. Warner, had 13 years of counseling experience and was White. Ms. Olivarez had 30 years experience as a counselor and was Latina.

### *Data Collection Process and Analysis*

Students were interviewed twice on school grounds, either before, during, or after the school day. The first interview focused on understanding students' general college aspirations and sources of college knowledge, support, and information. During this interview students were asked questions such as: "How did you decide you wanted to go to college?" and "Where do/did you get the most information about college?" The second interview provided students an opportunity to clarify and/or expand upon any previous responses and reflect on their understanding of how their social and cultural contexts shaped their ability to navigate the college choice process. Types of questions asked during the second interview included: "How do you think your background/characteristics influences/influenced your decision and planning to go to college after high school?" and "What recommendations do you have for students who are trying to decide whether to go to college and/or are planning to reach this goal?" All interviews were audio recorded and were between 30 minutes to one hour. The gap between students' first and second interviews ranged from one to two months, except for one student whose first and second interview were conducted on consecutive days for logistical reasons.

All counselors were interviewed once, with interviews lasting between thirty minutes to an hour. Interviews with counselors were conducted in their respective offices on their school campuses and were audio recorded. Counselors were asked questions related to their expectations of students once they finish high school; the role they felt they played in students' college choice process; how they assisted students with the college choice process in terms of information and guidance, or resources they recommended or individuals they referred students to; whether all students at their school had an equal opportunity to attend college; the types of challenges they often saw students encounter in obtaining their goal of attending college; and how a student's background or characteristics might influence his/her decision and ability to attend college.

All interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy. During the transcription process, all participants were provided pseudonyms. To begin analyzing the data, I drew upon aspects of Hatch's (2002) steps in conducting a typological analysis. A typological analysis begins with identifying the varying typologies to be examined. As Hatch indicated, "typologies are generated from theory, common sense, and/or research objectives, and initial data processing happens within those typological groupings" (p. 152). This type of data analysis was deemed particularly suitable since the conceptual framework of *familismo* and the research questions were driving the intent of this study. Thus, characteristics of *familismo*, as in the case of loyalty, solidarity, and reciprocity or tensions related to such characteristics, became typologies to look for within the data. Three overarching themes emerged in this process that were sufficiently supported by the text. As Hatch (2002) suggested, these themes were then written in the form of a one-sentence generalization. Hatch (2002) contended: "A generalization expresses a relationship between two or more concepts. ...If findings cannot be expressed as generalizations, chances are data analysis is incomplete" (p. 159). In this context, however, generalizations should not be confused with generalizability (Hatch, 2002). The three generalizations that resulted, which are presented in the findings, include: 1) Choosing a college close to home allows for familial support, 2) Renegotiating initial aspirations reflects loyalty and constraints on family, and 3) Leaving is a sacrifice for self and family that can evoke parental support.

### *Limitations*

This study is limited in scope and context, as I sought to provide a detailed account of the college choice experiences of the 20 Latina/o students interviewed. The

students attended high schools that served predominantly Latina/os, and the students were considered of lower socio-economic status. And while there may be many other high schools across the country that serve a similar student population, these high schools are also situated in a unique region that is also predominantly Latina/o, in part because it is along the U.S.-Mexico border. Thus, this region is transnational in nature, much like other communities that exist along the U.S.-Mexico border. Therefore, while other Latina/o students in similar contexts and of similar socio-demographic backgrounds might note commonalities with the participants in their college choice experiences, findings are not generalizable to all Latina/o students living in all parts of the country. The Latina/o students who were interviewed were also all of Mexican descent. Thus, a similar study with Latina/o students of Cuban, Puerto Rican, or Dominican descent living in a different region for instance, might reveal other distinct findings.

It is also important to note that the data utilized for this study was gathered during the 2009–2010 academic school year and was originally analyzed using a conceptual framework and research questions that were completely distinct from those adopted here. As such, additional interviews with members of students' families would have been optimal for this study given the *familismo* framework and research questions posed. However, such data was not originally collected, limiting the findings of this study to solely reflect students' college choice process and counselors' understandings of this process and their role in it. It is within these narratives that students and counselors spoke of the role of family in Latina/o students' college choice process.

## Results

Analysis of data indicated that the college choice processes of most Latina/o students in the study were significantly shaped by *familismo*. For a number of students interviewed, choosing the specific college to attend depended on the proximity of the institution from home, in part due to their desire to continue benefiting from their strong familial ties and support while in college. This finding is consistent with previous research (Ceja, 2001; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). Others, however, renegotiated their original intentions to leave the region for college by compromising and choosing to begin college at a regional institution with the intent of later transferring to another university outside the region. This renegotiation often reflected either a student's sense of loyalty to family, particularly when parents indicated that these were their wishes for the student, or a sense of reciprocity and responsibility, as in the case of students that felt they needed to financially contribute to their family income. A final group of students viewed leaving the region for college as a necessary sacrifice and the best viable option for their success and that of their families.

### *Choosing a College Close to Home Allows for Familial Support*

Students like Gloria, Celina, Sara, Cristobal, Samuel, and Ernie all aspired to begin their college education at a local/regional institution of higher education, and this was consistent with their parents' aspirations for them. These students wanted to be physically close to home so parental and familial support could be readily available in case they had "any problems" as they learned "what it's [college] like." As Ernie said, attending the local/regional university would be optimal in part because it would provide for an "easier" transition, since he would not have to move, and he would be able to have his parents available to "help" and "guide" him. Some of these students also considered the fact that attending the local/regional university would be "cheaper," so this would lessen the financial burden on students' families. These findings clearly reflect students' perceptions of family

members as reliable sources of help and support (Sabogal et al., 1987) as well as their sense of reciprocity in wanting to make a decision that was mutually beneficial, financially, for them and their family (Smith-Morris et al., 2012). At the same time, it is important to consider how this sense of reciprocity is not solely a cultural aspect of *familismo*, but is also influenced by the external structural forces that impact the family unit financially, as Baca Zinn (1994) contended.

The strong influence of *familismo* was also evident among a couple of students who described the pros and cons of attending the local university or an institution in the region as opposed to a university outside the region. Gloria explained, “I’m gonna stick to [local university first] because it’s more close to home [sic]. And if I move to San Antonio it’ll be like too soon.” When asked what she meant by “too soon,” Gloria admitted,

I go to San Antonio with my... cousins and stuff and I get really homesick, so I want to stay here for a while. That, and then of course, when I go to [regional university an hour outside the city], I’ll still be close to home, but not that close. ... that’s what I’m thinking, it’ll be a good idea.

Similarly, Samuel had already decided to attend the university in the region that was an hour away as opposed to another college outside the region or even outside the state:

My parents are, didn’t really want me to go too far. , They don’t, really want me to go to either UT [The University of Texas at Austin] or College Station [Texas A & M University] because, I guess it’s such a big school and it’d be my first time going there that ...they believe that I would get lost in the shuffle. So then I thought of going to [university in the region] only because I want to go far away enough to experience the college life, to say you know what, I’m living on my own, but to also be ... not really far away from home and in case I ever need anything from my friends who are still here or from my family that I can go to them and it won’t be, and it won’t be that much of a difficulty getting back.

In this case, Samuel referred to the two public flagships in the state and compared attending these two institutions to the regional university that is considerably smaller, although it is a four year, comprehensive university. At the same time, it is obvious that there is not a clear distinction between his own and his parents’ college aspirations for him. He considered the concerns his parents had for him in attending a university that was not only geographically distant from his home but that was so large that he might “get lost in the shuffle.” While Samuel valued his parents’ wishes, he also wanted to experience living on his own while being close enough to visit and access his parents for guidance and support.

Celina and Cristobal shared similar sentiments. They seemed to have a fear of leaving South Texas for college because they felt the support of their family would not be as accessible to them if they left the region. “I want to start here that way I can get a feel for what college life is really like,” Celina said. “I know if I come here ... I can always go to my family and say, ok, I need help with this, I need help with that.” However, she felt in leaving the region, “I’m probably going to be by myself and not really know as much people as I do down here [sic].” Implicit in Celina’s comments is that family can assist her once she is in college, whether it be in providing support or perhaps in regards to her academic needs. Yet Celina was a first-generation college student, so the actual assistance that her family could provide her in navigating a higher education institution would most likely be limited to emotional support.

*Renegotiating Initial Aspirations Reflects Loyalty and Constraints on Family*

There were also a number of students that had originally hoped to leave the region for school but changed their minds due to parental influence. In such cases, students agreed to attend a university in the city or the region for their entire undergraduate degree, although some compromised by agreeing to transfer to another university after a year or two. This latter choice was reflective of what Ms. Garza noted as being a common practice among students in the region. For one student, Heriberto, ultimately deciding to begin his collegiate studies at the local university and then transfer to the university that he had originally planned to attend was a reflection of his loyalty and sense of financial obligation to his mother. Another counselor, Ms. Marquez, reiterated how many Latina/o families' limited finances exacerbated Latina/o students' sense of financial obligation to their families and shaped their college aspirations and choices. She said, "Most of them [Latina/o students] will say financial problems" are their main concern when trying to decide where or if they should go to college. Ms. Marquez noted that even as high school students "a lot of them they help their parents" financially. Once again, these latter students' college choices must be considered in light of how *familismo* is not only a cultural characteristic, but also a trait cultivated and influenced by social forces outside the family unit, particularly for Latina/o and other racial/ethnic families that have historically been marginalized, resulting in lower-wage positions for some (Baca Zinn, 1994).

Mariela was one student who had made peace with the decision to begin college at the local university. "I wanted to go somewhere far from here," she said, "[but] my parents don't want me to because we're kind of like close together." She admitted that her father particularly did not want her to leave South Texas for college immediately after high school:

It's because my dad doesn't want me to go and like we're kind of really attached, like he doesn't want us, like me or my sister to go, and she's like studying here already. So, supposedly that's gonna help me because she could like help me through whatever she's done, like all the classes and stuff. So, that's kind of why I think I'm gonna start here. But like, I was looking yesterday at that booklet [from the university outside the region], and I really, really want to go. ... And then he was like, "Well, if you really want to go, like you should go." ... And he looked like sad. I was like, ugh, I don't know.

What Mariela revealed is how her father would prefer her to start at a local/regional university but would still support her decision if she chose otherwise. Once her father shared his true disappointment with the thought of her leaving, however, Mariela's sense of loyalty and obligation to her family, aspects of *familismo*, took precedence. At the same time, Mariela also shared these additional comments:

They [my parents] let them [my brothers] do more things than me, and my sister because we're girls. Like, I guess they [brothers] would have more, they get more chances like if they would want to go somewhere like another college, they [parents] would let them... like whatever right. But they're [parents] more like worried about me or my sister if we would [go to a university outside the region] because we're girls. So, I guess, it's that, like the fact that, like they do trust us, but they're more worried about my sister and I than my brothers.

These seemingly gendered expectations, however, cannot simply be assumed to be a reflection of a double standard, particularly in light of Mariela's father's willingness to support her if she chose to leave the region. His apprehension likely reveals

a more complex dynamic within the family, which cannot be further explored given the data at hand.

Raquel also renegotiated her original college plans after her mother revealed her desire to have Raquel attend the local/regional university: “I was planning on going to A&M, but after I talked to my mom about it, she said that she wants me to stay here for my basics first. ... I think she’s scared, kind of, because I’ll be living on my own. And I’m the last, I’m the youngest.” Ultimately, Raquel was “fine with staying” for her first two years of college since her mother supported Raquel transferring to Texas A&M after her “basics.” Nonetheless, in renegotiating her college aspirations Raquel exhibited a sense of loyalty, as well as trust and respect for her mother’s wishes, which superseded her own.

As previously noted, Heriberto was one student who expressed his loyalty and concern for his mother and the financial sense of obligation he felt to contribute to the household income as he began his postsecondary pursuits. For these reasons, Heriberto arrived at his decision to attend the local university for at least his first year of college and then possibly transfer to the original university he had wanted to attend after graduating high school:

Heriberto: At first it was like, I wanted to transfer, to go to [University in Central Texas] like right away [after high school] but then I knew my mom would have [financial] problems like it’s just me and my mom so, like, I knew she was gonna have problems by herself so I don’t want to leave her just yet, even though I’ve been here like what 18 years right but it’s like, you know it’s kind of like you want to stay with your mom a little bit longer and I decided to go over there, that... route, like just stay here and then go over there [to university outside the region].

Researcher: And how does she feel about that? I mean, has she expressed to you wanting to do, like for you to start here and then leave, or is that more from you or...?

Heriberto: She said you can do whatever you want *mijo* (son), as long as you study and you do something for yourself, like do good for you, but like I knew, like I know my mom, she knows me, so just I know that she wants me to stay because I’m her only child and the only thing that she has... Because she doesn’t get that much [income] and I recently quit my job just to focus more, more this year on school and then I can start again maybe next year after I turn 18 and I can work elsewhere.

Researcher: And what were you doing if you don’t mind my asking?

Heriberto: At first I was working at [a restaurant] in the mall, like a good job, like weekends, it helped my mom with bills, some bills but now it’s like high school is like stressful, so I had to get out and focus on this.

Heriberto’s decision must be considered in light of his family’s and his mother’s educational background and financial constraints. His mother was a housekeeper, who had limited education prior to coming to the U.S. from Mexico. He explained, “She’s the first person to move here [to the U.S.]. So, I guess I’m the first person to go to middle school and high school and then hopefully to college, you know.” Consequently, he felt that his mother “didn’t know anything about that [college], she said just go to school, do the best you can.” Thus, Heriberto’s college choices reflect his familial attitudes as well as the social constraints that his family experienced.

The strong sense of *familismo* on the part of Mariela, Raquel, and Heriberto, as well as their parents, influenced these students to renegotiate their original aspirations of leaving the region for college to beginning their postsecondary education at the local university instead. Each of them essentially felt confident in this compromise both for their own sake and for that of their families, and found that delaying their aspirations to attend a university outside the region did not necessarily mean they would never actually do so.

*Leaving is a Sacrifice for Self and Family that Can Evoke Parental Support*

Some students' college aspirations, like those of Braulio, Pete, and Thalia were contrary to their families', or at least one parent's, expectations for them. These students wanted to leave the region to pursue a higher education, but at the same time they exhibited strong attitudinal aspects of familism. In spite of initial opposition from one or both parents, these students maintained their hopes and rationalized this break from familial norms as a sacrifice in order to obtain a postsecondary education that would ensure a "better life" and potential social mobility for themselves and their families. This finding is consistent with that of Rosas and Hamrick (2002) who found that Latina/o students viewed leaving home to obtain a higher education as way for them to better position themselves to contribute to their families and communities. In this study, however, parents that originally objected to students' decisions to leave for college eventually supported their children's aspirations.

In his initial interview, Braulio explained how he wanted to attend one of the state's flagship institutions in Central Texas but, whereas his father did not necessarily mind that he leave, "Mom, she wants to keep me close." He said:

She [mother] wants me to settle here for [local university], and I don't want that. I want to get a better education. I know up there, there's a better education. That's why I want to move up to [Central Texas]... My dad's like, he supports me, he backs me up on anything I want. And my mom's the one, like she's so attached to me that she doesn't want to let me go. Well that's how moms are I guess.

During Braulio's second interview he continued to reiterate his mother's apprehensions about his leaving the region for college, but his comments suggested that his mother was beginning to support his decision, albeit reluctantly. He said, "My mom's basically the one that just wants to keep me here, ... but she says she's willing whatever decision I decide." His comments suggest that there is in fact not necessarily a double standard within Latina/o families, in terms of supporting males to leave the region for college more than females. Additionally, Braulio's reasoning for wanting to leave for college reflected his belief that universities outside the region could provide "a better education," which could ultimately result in a better means of giving back to his family.

Pete shared how his three older sisters, all of whom had left the region to attend college, had particularly shaped his college aspirations. He acknowledged that his mother, who had completed her college degree at the local university as an adult, had also been an inspiration to him. Although the notion of leaving to attend a university was not a foreign concept for his family, his parents were less supportive of his desire to leave, . Like Braulio, Pete wanted to attend one of the state's flagship institutions in Central Texas, which he thought was feasible given his high academic ranking at school. Yet he admitted, "My mom she's like, you can go to college, but you can just come to [local university] and you can do better here... and my

dad told me to stay... to work in the family business.” He objected to this saying, “I’m just like no, I know it’s better out there, they have like more choices out there [at the flagship institution].” Pete explained how his father owned a mechanic shop and since he was the youngest and only male in the family, his father had hoped he would take over the shop one day. But Pete admitted, “After what I’ve seen him [his father] go through, I’m just like, it’s not my thing.” When asked why he thought his parents had these particular expectations for him, Pete said he thought that his parents were likely afraid of him leaving the region and never returning:

[It is] probably because... they [parents] know that once I go to college, I’m not gonna want to come back because... I’m gonna learn that there’s better things out there... I think that that’s what they’re afraid of, maybe losing me, like to some bigger city or something.

This fear of “losing” one’s child to a college outside of the region was also held by Thalia’s mother. Thalia and her family were originally from South Texas, but had moved to the East Coast for a majority of Thalia’s life and only returned to the region within the last two or three years. As an academically high-achieving student, Thalia originally intended to apply to Ivy League and other out-of-state schools. However, now that the family was settled in South Texas again, Thalia noted the lengths her mother was going through to try to get Thalia to attend a local or regional university after high school. “She doesn’t like the idea of me being so far away so she, she actually recruited my boyfriend to convince me to stay.” Thalia indicated her willingness to compromise in trying to fulfill her own college aspirations while also pleasing her mother:

My mom doesn’t want me to leave Texas so I’ve gotta see if I can find a couple, three, four, five [universities] maybe in Texas and then some outside so I can see which ones accept me and then be like, ok, I’m sorry mom none of the colleges in Texas accepted me... If I really really really really really want to go to an Ivy league like all the way up there or something and I can go to Massachusetts, whatever, somewhere far away, she’ll let me go, but she doesn’t want me to go. But she’ll let me. She’ll try her hardest to make sure that I get all my stuff that I get all the money and all that stuff. That’s what she says all the time. She’s like, ‘I don’t want you to go that far away but if you do end up going that far away I’ll support you.’ My dad says so [too].

Ultimately, Thalia’s mother’s apprehensions about letting her daughter leave for college, which derived from love and concern, did not prevent supporting her daughter ultimately.

While Victor’s parents supported his choice to leave the region for college, he did express his own rationale for doing so despite knowing he would miss his family immensely. His sentiments seem to echo those of Braulio, Pete, and Thalia:

I mean I guess I wouldn’t mind the whole homesick situation because I mean... I know I can still come back and if I’m over there it’s for a reason. And that if I stay, when I come back I’ll be a better person. Yeah, like I can go out and I can say, well you know I don’t want to be away from home, away from my parents, but yet, like it’d be better if I return with like a degree or you know having accomplished something like graduating from college or a university and then I guess that would make [my parents] more proud of me.

The hesitations Latina/o parents expressed in letting their students leave for college were likely signs of strong attitudinal aspects of *familism*, and perhaps a lack of

familiarity with this process. As Ceja's (2001) findings suggested, "When parents were provided the opportunity to become more familiar with issues of financial aid or issues of living at home versus living in college, they [parents] became more trustworthy and accepting that going away to college for instance, was not necessarily a bad thing" (pp. 190–191). Ms. Warner, from Rios high school, shared her understanding of the prevalence of this mindset among Latina/o families and seemed to believe that some Latina/o parents' disapproval posed "a challenge." She also indicated that she did see this occur more often with females than males. At the same time, however, her comments suggest a lack of understanding of *familismo* and the possible external structural forces that impact students' college choices, which are at play for some Latina/o families:

I had students come to me who want to go to college but say they want to go to a specific college that may not be here in [the city], they may want to go outside, and their parents don't want them to. And that indeed is a challenge because although they [students] aspire to go out into, because the going out of state sometimes is another education as well, but for whatever reason the mom or dad, the parents want them to remain, for [college].

In light of Ms. Warner's comment, it is also important to consider whether she in fact did speak with parents in such situations in order to understand the contexts of parents' apprehensions. It would seem necessary in such a case to reach out to parents in order to provide support and up-to-date information to families regarding the postsecondary options available to students.

Furthermore, although it did not seem that the college choices of Latinas in this study were more often influenced by *familismo* than they were for their male counterparts, this does not mean that this is not the case among the larger Latina/o student population at the two high school sites, as Ms. Warner seemed to suggest. Ms. Marquez also alluded to this:

I don't think that a lot of things have changed [since] when I was in school and our expectations before going to college, but I still see a lot of the *machismo* here in our area. A lot of the girls they just want to get married, have kids and that's it. A lot of the boys are expected to work and help parents and that's priority instead of going to college.

*Machismo* is the popular term utilized in the U.S. to describe Latin masculinity (De La Cancela, 1991; Quiñones Mayo, 1994, as cited in Quiñones Mayo & Resnick, 1996). However, the term has been used to describe Latin masculinity in varying ways. In one sense, *machismo* has been used to describe a "true man as a varón, who is caring, responsible, decisive, strong of character, and the protector of the extended family," and alternatively has also been used to "describe men who are aggressive, physically strong, emotionally insensitive, and often womanizers" (Quiñones Mayo 1994, as cited in Quiñones Mayo & Resnick, 1996, p. 264). In mentioning *machismo*, Ms. Marquez appeared to be referring more to the expectation upheld for Latino males to be responsible, and in this sense work and contribute to the family income. Her comment also seemed to refer to the existence of stereotypical gender roles among some Latina/o students she has worked with.

Perhaps because the criteria to participate in this study included the intent to attend college after high school graduation, none of the students in this study spoke to explicit instances of *machismo*, the intent to marry soon after high school, or any doubts about attending college. For the Latina/o students in this study, it was not a question as to whether they would go to college, but instead where they

would go. All of the students were also Mexican American, so their level of acculturation could also have been a factor in the degree to which *machismo* emerged in this study. Yet Mendez and Rios high schools both serve a diverse population of Latina/o students, some of whom are recent immigrants that may be less acculturated. This diversity may account for Ms. Marquez's comments.

Like Ms. Warner and Ms. Marquez, Ms. Garza also noted finances and "the parents not wanting to let them go [away to college]" as factors that greatly influenced Latina/o students' college choices. Ms. Garza, however, seemed to take a more deficit view of *familismo* as did Ms. Warner, noting this characteristic as a cultural challenge:

It's just the Hispanic culture. They don't want to let go ... Maybe the parents are coming from Mexico and they might be educated parents but they want them here. You can go to [local university] *mijito* [son], you know. And it's that kind of thinking. And then the kids want to please the parents, so they say, 'Ok, I'll stay.' And sometimes, a lot of times it's compromising, they're like okay well I'll stay a year and then can I go, and like okay, well if you do well the first year, we'll let you go.

She did think that the mindset of many Latina/o parents, however, was "starting to change more," particularly as the number of Latina/o students with college educated parents increased. Parents who had gone through the college choice process themselves were more apt to support their children's wishes to attend a university outside the region. Ms. Garza further explained how at times she had to "convince" students to attend a university outside the region once they had obtained a scholarship to do so, even when this was contrary to the student's first inclinations and the parents' hopes. She described one instance:

I just heard from one of my coaches, she says... one of our girls... got offered a full ride in, I don't remember, it was one of the Iowa, Indiana or Idaho, one of those places .. and she came to me and was like, I don't want to leave my family, and I was like but you know man that's such an awesome experience, you know, you're gonna regret it, at least try it. And if ... you try it and say ... I don't want to do this, at least you don't have the regret of well, maybe if I would've gone, you know. I, something would've turned out differently and she ended up going because the coach and I were pushing you know, at least try it *mijita* (sweetheart) and actually the university flew her down over the summer for a tour.... So the coach was telling me, she's totally enjoying it, and she's playing volleyball and basketball and they're gonna go play at a game in Hawaii. And so now the younger sister's planning to go with her when she graduates. So ... just trying to convince them, or persuade them because the parents are saying, 'Don't go, don't go.' we're saying, yes go, it's an experience, you'll make new friends. .... And of course for some it turns out good and some of them go and come back and say you know I just, X amount of reasons I couldn't. And that's fine, but at least you tried.

In this case, it was the student's strong sense of *familismo* that weighed heavily on her initial decision not to accept the scholarship and attend the out-of-state institution. All the while, her parents did not want her to leave the region for college as well. As the narrative suggests, the student eventually was happy with the decision to attend the institution and this influenced her younger sister's college aspirations to attend there as well.

### **Discussion and Implications**

Findings from this study contribute to the literature on Latina/o college choice in general (González, Stoner & Jovel, 2003; Martinez, 2012; Perez, 2007; Perez &

McDonough, 2008; Person & Rosenbaum, 2006) and explore the role that family plays in Latina/o students' college choice process in particular (Alvarez, 2010; Ceja, 2001, 2004, 2006; Gándara, 1995; Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2006; Kiyama, 2011; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). While a number of previous qualitative studies on role of family on the college choice experience of Latino students have focused on females in particular, (Alvarez, 2010; Ceja, 2001, 2004, 2006; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002), this study examined the experiences of both females and males of Mexican descent. This is important because, as Tornatzky et al. (2003) pointed out:

Among Latino communities, cultural traditions tend to create different patterns of expectations for young women. The expected physical attachment to and presence in the family gets confounded and accentuated with gender-specific roles, and [yet] there is little research on how these cultural and familial traditions impact college choices. (p. 4)

Findings further suggest that both Latino males and females were influenced by a strong sense of *familismo*, although how this value shaped students' college choices did sometimes vary based on gender-specific roles and expectations. For instance, males more often felt obligated or were expected to attend a university closer to home in order to financially contribute to the family or take over a family business; this was not necessarily the case for females. Females more often felt a sense of loyalty to stay close to home because of close familial bonds and out of respect for parents' wishes. Among parents that did want their children to stay close to home, there did not seem to be any particular pattern or distinctions in the degree to which fathers versus mothers exhibited this with their children, whether students were male or female.

Given the findings, there are a few practical considerations that can be offered for high school personnel or other individuals working with Latina/o students during the college choice process. For one, it is important to be knowledgeable about *familismo* itself, and the role it can have on Latina/o students' college choices. *Familismo* must be considered for what it is, a trait that is common among Latina/o families and that is an asset in many ways, even while it is also reinforced by external societal forces that have historically marginalized Latina/o and other minority racial/ethnic families (Baca Zinn, 1994). Before considering as a challenge parents' expectations to have their child attend a university that is closer to home, stakeholders should ensure that families have access to all of the necessary college information that can help them in guiding their children's college choices. Latina/o parents who are more informed of the nuances of the college choice process and the benefits of living on a college campus may be more accepting of students going away to college, if the family can also financially afford this choice (Ceja, 2001). Furthermore, all of the parents in this study were ultimately supportive of their children's college choices and it is this support that must be harnessed to assist Latina/o students in fulfilling their postsecondary pursuits.

In light of the previous recommendation, it is also necessary to expand efforts to assist not only Latina/o students with their college choice process but also the entire family in this endeavor, as previous research has suggested (Alvarez, 2010; Kiyama, 2010; Rios & Kiyama, 2012; Yamamura, Martinez, & Saenz, 2010). After the original data for this study was collected, I became aware of a particular program in South Texas that places Latina/o families at the center of college outreach efforts, as opposed to other programs that often view family as significant but often secondary stakeholders to consider (Swail & Perna, 2002). The *Abriendo Puertas* program, which literally means "Open Doors," is a non-profit organization that

offers two family-centered college access programs and has developed a research-based, family-oriented curriculum for college outreach. The program, which took root after a Texas university brought together 37 Latina mothers in the region to “dream about their children’s future,” aptly utilizes an “approach [that] instills a family’s responsibility to engage in activities which help prepare their children for college access and success” (History of Abriendo Puertas, 2013). While Abriendo Puertas is limited in the number of families that it can serve, its model and curriculum can be utilized as resources for those working with Latina/o students and families.

Attending a university that is close to home should also not be conceived as a loss, or something to be discouraged, if attending a more affordable local institution is the only viable option for a student. It is important to convey to students support for choosing to attend college in general, and to emphasize the various pathways available to obtaining a higher education. Thus, instead of viewing a Latina/o student’s decision to stay closer to home as a disappointment, stakeholders should assist the student in understanding the necessary steps to transfer to another university if that is what s/he hopes to do after a year or two. Alternatively, one could discuss strategies students can use to succeed in continuing their postsecondary studies while living at home.

It is also important to consider other factors perhaps at play when even Latina/o parents who are familiar with the notion of going away to college still prefer that their children attend universities close to home. This was the case with Pete, whose parents were familiar with leaving for college but wanted him to stay so that he could take over the family business. While it was not clear whether this expectation was financially based, it is important to ensure that students and families have the necessary financial information to guide them in the college choice process if this is a major factor in deciding between a local university and one that is geographically farther from home. At the same time, if parents’ expectations are driven more by a general uncertainty about the student leaving home, then it would be beneficial for someone working with the student to be willing to advocate on his/her behalf, as Ms. Garza did with the student who did not want to accept the scholarship to attend the out-of-state university. Parents, however, should be included in this process.

In conclusion, findings continue to support the fact that the college choice process is particularly complex for Latina/o students, and that school personnel, post-secondary institutions, and college outreach programs must consider this as they assist Latina/o students and families in navigating this process. While this study did not include the perspectives of students’ family members, a few studies (Alvarez, 2010; Kiyama, 2010, 2011; Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012) have examined the entire family unit to further understand the college choice experience of Latina/o students. However, this study contributes to our understanding of the role of *familismo* in Latina/os students’ college choice processes by providing evidence to show how this trait is not solely reflective of Latina/o culture, but also of external forces that impact the family unit (Baca Zinn, 1994) and consequently shape a student’s viable postsecondary options. Additional studies that further explore the college choice process of Latina/o students and families, however, are needed to better serve this growing population’s needs.

## References

- Alvarez, C. L. (2010). Familial negotiation of the Latina college choice process: An exploration of how parents and their daughters obtain and utilize information to navigate the process. *Enrollment Management Journal: Student Access, Finance, and Success in Higher Education*, 4(4), 57–80.

- Aud, S., Fox, M., & KewalRamani, A. (2010). *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*. (NCES 2010-015). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Johnson, F., Kena, G., Roth, E., Manning, E., Wang, X., & Zhang, J. (2012). *The Condition of Education 2012* (NCES 2012-045). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Auerbach, S. (2006). "If the student is good, let him fly": Moral support for college among Latino immigrant parents. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 5(4), 275–292.
- Auerbach, S. (2007). From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education*, 42(3), 250–283.
- Baca Zinn, M. (1994). Feminist Rethinking from Racial-Ethnic Families. In M. Baca Zinn and B. Thornton Dill (Eds.), *Women of Color in U.S. Society* (pp. 303–314). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). Understanding the college-choice process. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 107, 5–22.
- Ceja, M. (2001). *Applying, choosing, and enrolling in higher education: Understanding the college choice process of first-generation Chicana students*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles.
- Ceja, M. (2004). Chicana college aspirations and the role of parents: Developing educational resiliency. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(4), 338–362.
- Ceja, M. (2006). Understanding the role of parents and siblings as information sources in the college choice process of Chicana students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(1), 87–104.
- Choy, S. P. (2001). *Students whose parents did not go to college: Postsecondary access, persistence, and attainment* (NCES 2001–126). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, LatCrit theory and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing Students of Color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 105–126.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1994). Consejos: The power of cultural narrative. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 25, 298–316.
- Fránquiz, M., & Salazar, M. (2004). The transformative potential of humanizing pedagogy: Addressing the diverse needs of Chicano/Mexicano students. *The High School Journal*, 87(4), 36–53.
- Fry, R. & Lopez, M. H. (2012). *Hispanic Student Enrollments Reach New Highs in 2011*. Washington, DC: The Pew Hispanic Center.
- Gándara, P. (1995). *Over the ivy walls: The educational mobility of low-income Chicanos*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- González, N., Moll, L. C., Tenery, M. F., Rivera, A., Rendón, P., González, R., & Amanti, C. (1995). Funds of knowledge for teaching Latina/o households. *Urban Education*, 29(4), 443–470.
- González, K., Stoner, C., & Jovel, J. (2003). Examining the role of social capital in access to college for Latinas: Toward a college opportunity framework. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 2(1), 246–170.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). London: Sage Publications.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- History of Abriendo Puertas. (2013). Abriendo Puertas. Parental Communication Initiative. Retrieved March 2, 2013, from <http://www.families4college.org/index.php>
- Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. (1987). Studying student college choice: A three-phase model and the implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 2(3), 207–221.
- Hurtado-Ortiz, M., & Gauvain, M. (2006). Postsecondary education among Mexican American youth: Contributions of parents, siblings, acculturation, and generational status. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 29(2), 181–191.
- Kiyama, J. M. (2010). College aspirations and limitations: The role of educational ideologies and funds of knowledge in Mexican American families. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47, 330–356.
- Kiyama, J. M. (2011). Family lessons and funds of knowledge: College going paths in Mexican American Families. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 10(1), 23–42.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Marín, G., & Marín, B. V. (1991). *Research with Hispanic Populations*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Martinez, M. A. (2012). Wealth, stereotypes, and issues of prestige: The college choice experience of Mexican American students within a community context. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 11(1), 67–81.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Núñez, A. M., & Cuccaro-Alamin, S. (1998). *First-generation students: Undergraduates whose parents never enrolled in postsecondary education*. (NCES 98-082). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

- Perez, P. (2007). *Social capital and chain migration: The college choice process of Chicana and Chicano community college, transfer and university students*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles.
- Perez, P., & McDonough, P. (2008). Understanding Latina and Latino college choice: A social capital and chain migration analysis. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 7(3), 249–265.
- Perna, L. W. (2006). Studying college access and choice: a proposed conceptual model. *Higher Education: Handbook of theory and research*, 21, 99–157.
- Perez, A., & Rosenbaum, J. E. (2006). Chain enrollment and college enclaves: Benefits and drawbacks of Latina/o college students' enrollment decisions. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 133, 51–60.
- Reese, L., Balzano, S., Gallimore, R., & Goldenberg, C. (1995). The concept of educación: Latina/o family values and American schooling. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 23(1), 57–81.
- Rios-Aguilar, C., & Kiyama, J. M. (2012). Funds of knowledge: An approach to studying Latina(o) students' transition to college. *Journal of Latino and Education*, 11(1), 2–16.
- Rosas, M., & Hamrick, F. (2002). Postsecondary enrollment and academic decision making: Family influences on women college students of Mexican descent. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(1), 59–69.
- Sabogal, F., Marín, G., Otero-Sabogal, R., Marín, B. V., & Perez-Stable, E. J. (1987). Hispanic familism and acculturation: What changes and what doesn't? *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 9(4), 397–412.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Smith-Morris, C., Morales-Camps, D., Alvarez, E., A. C., & Turner, M. (2012). An anthropology of Familismo: On narratives and description of Mexican/Immigrants. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 1–26.
- Swail, W. S., & Perna, L. W. (2002). Pre-college outreach programs: A national perspective. In W. G. Tierney & L. S. Hagedorn (Eds.). *Increasing Access to College: Extending Possibilities for All Students* (pp. 15–34). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Texas Education Agency. (2010). 2009–2010 Academic Excellence Indicator System. Retrieved June 8, 2011 from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/>
- Tornatzky, L., Lee, J., Mejía, O., & Tarant, S. (2003). *College choices among Latinos: Issues of leaving home*. Claremont, CA: The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.
- Valdés, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distance between culturally-diverse families and schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Valencia, R. R., & Black, M. S. (2002). “Mexican Americans don't value education!” On the basis of the myth, mythmaking, and debunking. *Journal of Latina/os and Education*, 1(2), 81–103.
- Vélez-Ibañez, C. G. & Greenberg, J. B. (1992). Formation and transformation of funds of knowledge among U.S.-Mexican households. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 23(4), 313–335.
- Yamamura, E. K., & Martinez, M. A., & Saenz, V. B. (2010). Moving beyond high school expectations: Examining stakeholders' responsibility for increasing Latina/o students' college readiness. *The High School Journal*, 93(3), 126–148.

