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*University of Central Florida*

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EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF LATINO/A PARENTS  
OF FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS  
PURSUING A DOCTORAL DEGREE

by

NATALIA LEAL TORO  
B.A. Rollins College, 2003  
M.Ed. University of Florida, 2006

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Department of Child, Family, and Community Sciences  
in the College of Education and Human Performance  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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2017

Major Professor: Rosa Cintrón

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## ABSTRACT

Research points to Latino/a parents as an important source of motivation and support for high achieving Latino/a students who are the first in their families to go to college (Arellano & Padilla, 2006; Gándara, 1982; 1994; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Zalaquett, 2005); however, very little is known about their experience as they parent children whose educational paths are so different from their own. Cultural values such as collectivism and familism play a unique role in the level of connection between these parents and their children (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995), creating dynamics that merit exploration. This dissertation qualitatively examines how seven Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing a PhD expressed the parenting characteristics outlined in Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005). Furthermore, this study explores how these parents experienced their daughters' higher education journey. Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology was utilized in analyzing parents' voices. The textural and structural descriptions of major and minor themes provided the essence of the parents' experience. Example of themes are: "*Pero la Apoyo* - Uncertainty and Support for the PhD", "*Siempre Juntos* - High Levels of Interaction", and "*Amor Compasivo* - Distance, Pain and Sacrifice". Recommendations include support for pre-doctoral preparation initiatives, co-curricular innovations, and the exploration of the impact of modern technologies on the communication between parents and their children while in college.

*To my loving husband, son, and parents for making this achievement possible. You believed in me, you supported me, and you motivated me every step of the way.  
This is ours. Los amo.*

*And to my dear friend Carlene - Your spirit has been with me every day, guiding me.  
I will continue to make you proud.*

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## OPENING VIGNETTE

Flor's eyes filled with tears every time she remembered that soon her only daughter, Elisa, would be leaving. Elisa was moving from Florida to California to pursue a PhD in biology. When Elisa told her parents that she would be paid \$35,000 a year to pursue her graduate degree, they could not believe it. That was more than Flor and Manuel's annual income combined. Flor did not understand exactly what her daughter was studying, why she needed to go to school for so long, or why she was moving so far from home. However, everything that Elisa had accomplished filled her with immense pride.

Twenty-five years earlier, Flor and Manuel left Guatemala fleeing violence and terrible economic conditions. Neither had completed high school. While as a young man Manuel had aspirations of becoming a doctor, he simply did not have the financial ability to pursue that dream. Once in the United States, Manuel found work in construction and Flor began to work in a factory. Flor missed her family every day and often wondered if they had made the right decision in leaving their country.

Elisa's birth gave new meaning to Flor and Manuel's lives. Given that their neighborhood was riddled with gangs and violence, they agonized about how to best protect Elisa from harm. They decided that it would be best for Flor to stay home with Elisa during the day until she was old enough to go to school. In order to make ends meet, an already exhausted Flor cleaned offices at night after Manuel got home. Flor remembers telling her daughter from an early age: "*tienes que estudiar y prepararte mucho para que llegues a ser algo.*" "You have to study and prepare yourself so that you can become something." Flor's biggest fear was that Elisa would end up like her, cleaning after other people and barely making a living; or worse, that like so many of the neighborhood girls, she would become a teen mother.

Once Elisa started school, she became her parents' source of pride. She graduated from high school with honors and went on to the local community college. On scholarship, she later transferred to a Research I institution 40 minutes away from home. There, while initially intending to pursue a medical degree, she found her passion conducting biological research and joined the McNair Scholars Program. While at first Manuel was devastated to find out that his daughter would not be a medical doctor, he soon began to revel in his daughter's success. Whenever Elisa needed money for rent, gas, or food, Flor and Manuel would provide it for her, even if that meant that they had to struggle to cover their own bills. Flor never told Elisa about all the sleepless nights she spent worrying about her mental and physical health, as she saw her daughter struggle to do well in school. The immense joy Flor felt when she saw Elisa graduate from college was indescribable. She would be a professor one day. She would be able to take care of herself. It was all worth it.

After hugging and kissing Elisa goodbye, Flor told her daughter how proud she was of her and smiled. Seeking to protect her, as always, she did not want Elisa to know that her heart was breaking to see her go.

CHAPTER 1  
THE PROBLEM AND ITS CLARIFYING COMPONENTS:  
ILLUMINATING AN UNKNOWN JOURNEY

Introduction

The role of parents in higher education has received growing attention in the past two decades (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Institutional staff members have seen a conspicuous rise in parental involvement, prompting an increase in the number of programs offered to incorporate parents in their child's college experience. Moreover, research points to the benefits of parental support and attachment on the retention, identity development, and academic success of college students (Cutrona, Cole, Colangelo, Assouline & Russell, 1994; Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001; Wartman & Savage, 2008). As a result, institutions from across the country are connecting with parents like never before. Research on baby boomer parents and millennial students has provided student affairs professionals a new language to explain the phenomena they experience. Literature points to over-involved helicopter parents, hovering over their children, seeking to ease the experience of their 'special' child (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Kiyama, Harper, Ramos, Aguayo, Page, & Riester, 2015). Colleges and universities 'see' these parents precisely because they are highly involved; they are typically White, college educated, and upper-middle class (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Although institutions acknowledge the importance, influence, and place of this vocal and visible group of parents, the voices of low-income parents and parents of color are largely left out of the mainstream institutional narrative (Kimaya et al., 2015). Their importance, influence, experience and place must also be explored and acknowledged.

This study gives a voice to a particular group of parents: Latina/o parents of first-generation college students pursuing doctoral degrees. I chose this population not only because it represents my own parents and the parents of many of my students, but also because it encompasses unique and complex narratives. Immigration status, language barriers, cultural differences, financial barriers, and limited educational attainment are a few of the factors that play a role in the lives of many parents in this demographic. In addition, the position in which these parents find themselves, parenting high achieving children pursuing doctorates, not in medicine, a career many of them are familiar with, but in philosophy, a new uncharted territory, provides an important narrative that can help to elucidate the higher education journey from a new point of view.

#### Problem Statement

Latinos/as pursuing a PhD, such as the children of the parents participating in this study, comprise a very small portion of the Latino/a population in the United States. Less than 1% of all adult Latinos/as hold a doctoral degree (Excelencia in Education, 2015). Latinos/as have the lowest educational attainment rate of any racial/ethnic group in the United States, making the achievement of a PhD a true feat (Excelencia in Education, 2015; Fry & Gonzalez, 2008; Kena et al., 2015; National Center of Education Statistics, 2013). The low attainment rates of Latinos/as are a cause of national concern, as by 2050 Latino/a children will make up one-third of the school age population. Thus, the prosperity of the nation is inextricably tied to their success (Murphey, Guzman, & Torres, 2014; White House, 2011).

As researchers explore variables that affect Latino/a students' access, retention, persistence, graduation and success, it is important to delve more deeply into the role of parents in their children's educational journey. Historically, literature pointed to Latino/a parents within a deficit perspective, promoting that these parents by and large did not value education (Ceja, 2004; Matos, 2015; Sowell, 1981; Valencia & Black, 2002). Lack of parental involvement in the K-12 system, high dropout rates, low rates of college enrollment, and the perception that parents encouraged their children to join the workforce instead of pursuing a college degree have been cited as proof of the low value that Latino/a parents place on education (Guerra & Nelson, 2013; Sowell, 1981). Challenging those narratives, studies have found that Latino/a parents are indeed involved in their children's K-12 education in culturally appropriate ways, that they perceive a college education as necessary for upward mobility, and that seeing their children achieve that feat is of great importance (Alfaro, O'Reilly-Diaz & Lopez, 2014; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Studies that have explored Latino/a parents' role in their children's educational pursuits include very little information on the experience of the parents themselves, making it difficult to holistically understand these parents' particular journeys.

#### Purpose and Significance of Study

Unlike most previous studies that have explored parental influence on students, the focus of this study is to examine the experience of the parents themselves as they navigate parenting high-achieving students pursuing a PhD. The collectivistic values espoused by Latinos/as and the key role that familism plays in Latino/a families provide a

strong context for exploring the personal experiences of parents, as they form an important part of the Latino/a student experience (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995).

Exploring the experiences of Latino/a parents with limited levels of education can provide a better understanding of the journey they undertake when their children navigate the higher education pipeline, as well as the impact of education on families and communities. Importantly, it can help higher education administrators understand how to better support Latino/a parents and students. Beyond that, giving a voice to this understudied population is, in itself, an important undertaking.

#### Theoretical Framework

This study was analyzed through the lens of Parent Development Theory. Parent Development Theory (PDT) presents a framework for understanding the role of parents within a social context (Mowder, 2005; Mowder, Harvey, Moy, & Pedro, 1995; Mowder, Harvey, Pedro, Rossen, & Moy, 1993). This model posits that society perceives people with children as having a parenting role, which they must accept and perform in order to be considered parents. In this context, there are at least two individuals, the parent and the child, who must interact, perform their prescribed roles, and be socially recognized as having these respective roles. Moreover, parenting is a life-long relationship which can only be terminated when the parent or the child are no longer part of the relationship (Mowder, 2005).

According to the PDT model, the conception of what parenting entails is formed early in life, and it shifts and changes throughout the various life stages due to maturity



and experience. Once individuals become parents, their views on the concept of parenting are further changed and modified by their background, experiences, family dynamics, the needs of their child, and their sociocultural context. Furthermore, parents' perceptions of the parenting role continue to evolve throughout their lives (Mowder, 2005). The PDT model provides a framework to assess the perceptions and behaviors of parents and how they shift and change over time.

Mowder (2005) proposed six parenting characteristics within the model: bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity (Table 1) (Mowder et al., 1993, 2005). *Bonding* describes the love and affection that parents feel towards their children; attachment is the corresponding term used to describe the affection that children feel towards their parents. *Discipline* refers to the limits and rules that parents set for their children and how they ensure those limits and rules are adhered to. *Education* is the transmission of information from parents to their children. This characteristic includes guiding and teaching, as well as role modeling, counseling, and advising. *General Welfare and Protection* means that parents meet their child's basic needs (shelter, food, water, clothing) and ensure a safe and healthy environment for them. *Responsivity* refers to the responsiveness of parents towards their children. In other words, as parents hear, see, or perceive the needs of the child, they respond to that need by performing tasks such as helping, assisting, and supporting their child. Finally, *sensitivity* denotes the way in which parents understand what the child is communicating and accurately respond to their child. In this context, sensitivity may include parents understanding, respecting and comforting their child (Mowder, 2005, pp. 51-52).

Table 1

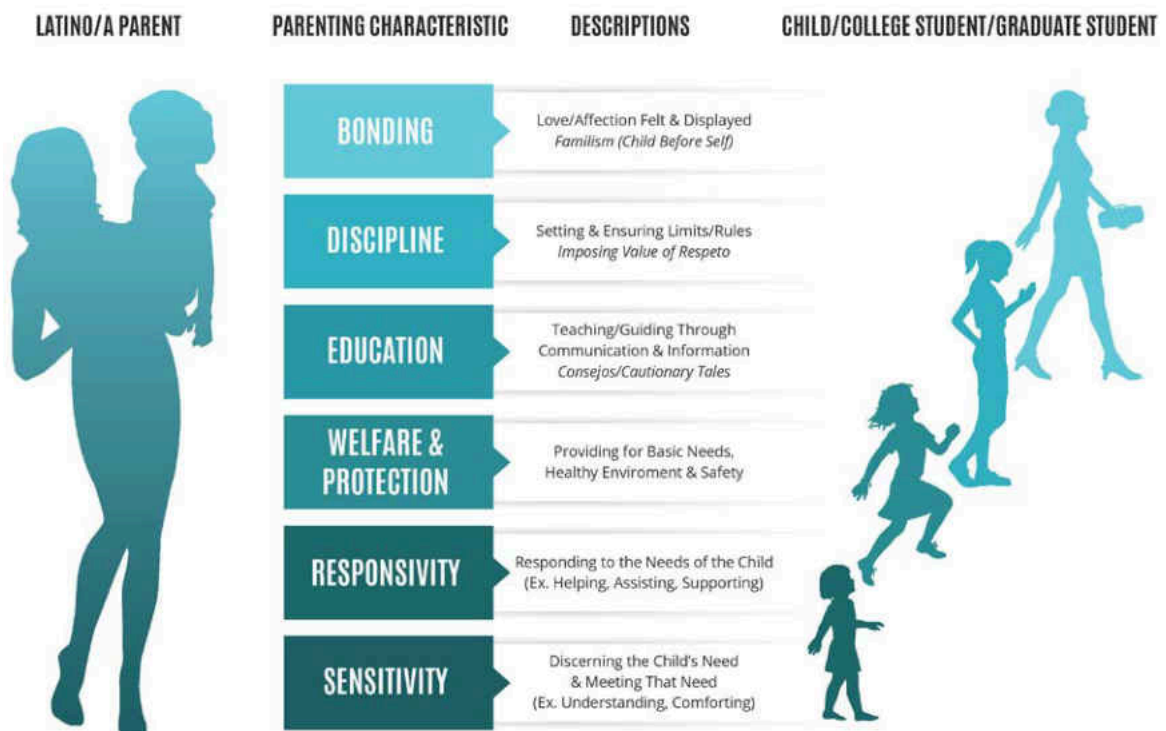
*Parent Development Theory: Parenting Characteristics*

Parenting Characteristic	Description of Parenting Characteristic/Behavior
Bonding	Affection and love felt and displayed from parent to child
Discipline	Limits placed on child and ways to ensure child adheres to limits
Education	Teaching, guiding through communication of information
General Welfare & Protection	Meeting basic needs of child (shelter, food, clothing) and protecting children from harm
Responsivity	Discerning and responding to the needs of child
Sensitivity	Accurately determining what their child is seeking to convey and responding to that need

*Note:* Adapted from “Parent Development Theory: Understanding Parents, Parenting Perceptions, and Parenting Behaviors,” by B. A. Mowder, 2005, *Journal of Early Childhood and Infant Psychology*, 1, pp. 45-63.

Conceptualization

In exploring Parent Development Theory (PDT) and seeking to qualitatively apply it to Latina/o parents, I sought studies that closely mirrored my method and population. However, I only found studies focused on quantitatively assessing PDT. There was also a dearth of research examining the Latino/a parent population through the PDT framework. One of the applicable studies found, written by Franco (2008), utilized existing literature to propose how each PDT characteristic may relate to Latino/a parenting. Thus, in conceptualizing PDT for this particular study, I integrated the literature explored in this dissertation with some of Franco’s ideas on Latinos/as and PDT (Figure 1).



*Note.* This illustration is an interpretation of the concepts posited in “Parent Development Theory: Understanding Parents, Parenting Perceptions, and Parenting Behaviors,” by B. A. Mowder, 2005, *Journal of Early Childhood and Infant Psychology* and “Latinos and the Parenting Role: An Investigation of Perceptions, Behaviors and Acculturation,” by A. M. Franco, 2011, *Dissertation Abstracts International*.

*Figure 1.* Parent Development Theory incorporating concepts related to Latino/a parents.

### Bonding

Mowder (2005) described bonding as the love and affection felt and displayed towards a child. Franco (2008) connected bonding with familism, which places emphasis on the family instead of the self. Familism denotes a strong bond between Latino/a parents and their children, where each is an extension of the other. Ultimately, family is the most important component of each member’s life (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco,

1995). Previous researchers have proposed that students demonstrate the value of familism by prioritizing family (Desmond & Lopez Turley, 2009; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Similarly, Latino/a mothers have reported that raising their children is the most important aspect of their lives (Durand, 2010). Thus, parents exemplifying the value of familism are likely to emphasize their children above themselves, their needs, and their desires.

### Discipline

Mowder's (2005) concept of discipline encompasses the limits that parents place on a child and how they ensure those limits are respected. This concept is related to Baumrind's (1966) permissive and restrictive parenting characteristics (Mowder, 2005). Although there is no definitive 'Latino/a parenting style,' Latinos/as have been associated with authoritarian parenting (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). In addition, Franco (2008) proposed that for Latinos/as discipline is connected to the concept of *respeto*, which implies respect towards elders. Beyond respect for elders, Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rudy (2006) indicated that being respectful includes having good manners and respecting the roles and expectations of all family members.

### Education

Education, as described by Mowder (2005), denotes teaching and guiding through communication and information. The characteristic of education, in the context of Latino/a parenting, underlies the emphasis on education within the home but not

necessarily interactions with the school (Franco, 2008; Zarate, 2007). Mowder also highlighted that education can be performed through role modeling, giving advice, and providing guidance, recognized as functions that Latino/a parents undertake (Ceja, 2004; Zarate, 2007). The Spanish concept of *educación* goes beyond formal schooling to include moral and interpersonal training (Durand, 2010; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy 2006). Furthermore, the concept of education is related to *consejos* and cautionary tales, narrative tools commonly utilized by Latino/a parents to provide children with guidance (Auerbach, 2002, 2006, 2007; Ceja, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994).

#### General Welfare and Protection

The concept of general welfare and protection indicates that parents meet their children's basic needs and aim to protect them from harm (Mowder, 2005). Research conducted on this concept, in the context of Latino/a parents (especially immigrants), has shown that difficult socioeconomic conditions and confusing interactions with institutions may lead these parents to focus on protecting their children from harm (Franco, 2008). For example, Gándara and Contreras (2009) stated that the authoritarian parenting style attributed to many Latinas/os may serve to keep the children of low-income Latina/os 'safe' in high-risk urban environments.

#### Responsivity

Based on Mowder's (2005) definition, responsivity denotes the extent to which parents are responsive to the needs of their child. In this context, parents pay attention to

their children by seeing, hearing, and sensing that their child may be in need and proceed to respond to that need. Franco (2008) explained, “While more research is needed concerning responsivity in Latino/a parents, preliminary research has shown that Latino/a parents are supportive and committed to their children” (p. 24). This finding is supported by previous studies that established that parents seek to respond to their children’s needs by providing various types of support within the extent of their education and resources (Arellano & Padilla, 2006; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Zarate, 2007).

### Sensitivity

Mowder (2005) defined sensitivity as accurately determining what the child is seeking to convey and responding to that need. This characteristic includes “indications of respecting, understanding, comforting, and responding to a child’s specific need” (p. 52). One of the participants in Hurtado and Sinha’s (2006) study described this kind of parental sensitivity when sharing that her mother could tell how she was feeling as soon as they began talking on the phone. On the other hand, the lack of parental understanding of Latino/a doctoral students’ educational pursuits, cited in various studies, could be interpreted as lack of sensitivity (Gonzalez et al., 2001; Sowell, Allum, & Okahana, 2015).

### Research Questions

1. How do Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing their PhD recall their personal experience as their children navigated their academic journey?
2. What impact do parents perceive that their child's educational journey had on themselves or other members of their family?
3. How do Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing a PhD describe their parenting role?

### Definition of Terms

Educational Attainment: Highest degree of education completed.

First-Generation College Student: Defined by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) for the purposes of TRIO programs as “(A) an individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree; or (B) In the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not receive a baccalaureate degree” (USDOE, 2011., p. 9).

Latino/a: “A native or inhabitant of Latin America” or “a person of Latin American origin living in the United States” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Used in this dissertation by preference of author; however, the terms Hispanic, Latino, and Latino/a are interchangeable.

Low-income: Defined by the Department of Education for the purposes of TRIO programs as “an individual from a family whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150% of an amount equal to the poverty level determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census” (USDOE, n.d., p. 9).

### Positionality

One of the most vivid images I have from my childhood is my mother telling me time and time again that I had to prepare myself so I would not have to depend on anyone to take care of me – so I could take care of myself. Wanting to make my parents proud, I excelled in school; and, while my parents did not attend college, I always knew I would go to college. Although born in the United States, I was raised in Colombia, a country my family loves and where our lives were rooted. As Colombia’s economy deteriorated and violence overtook the country, my parents made the difficult decision to move back to the United States when I was 12 years old, leaving everything behind. I would be lying if I said that I was happy with their decision at the time – I desperately wanted to stay and be with my friends and family there. But I always knew that what they were doing was for my siblings and me, so we could have the bright future they envisioned.

I cannot think of an instance when my parents were not supportive of my aspirations. Although they could not guide me as to how the higher education system worked or pay for my education, they encouraged me to succeed. My dad, one of the brightest people I know, proofread my Spanish literature essays to ensure my grammar was impeccable (I was a Spanish Literature and Culture major in college). My mother



took care of me. Even if she had had a long day at work, she insisted on doing my laundry when I went home, cooked me extra meals to take to school, and called me all the time just to ask “¿*Ya comiste?*” “Have you eaten?” and then, following up, as if to make sure I was not lying, she would ask, “¿*Que comiste?*” “What did you eat?” As I moved more than two hours away from home to go to graduate school, or later, as I moved to a different state for my first professional job, my parents supported me every step of the way. It was not until years later that my mom told me how depressed she was when my sister and I left for college and how she missed us every day we were away. I am sure that to this day my parents do not really understand what I do, but that does not stop them from continuing to support me.

I have spent my professional career working with low-income, underrepresented and underserved students. In every one of my positions, the majority of my students have expressed that their parents are integral to their success. The type of love and admiration my students feel for their parents and their appreciation for the sacrifices they have made speak to the impact that parents have in the educational achievement of these young people. However, in my master’s and doctoral studies, as I read literature on first-generation students, Latino/a students, and students of color, research typically focused on the deficits that these students faced as a result of the low educational attainment of their parents. Furthermore, researchers consistently emphasized the lack of involvement that parents within these demographics had in their children’s education. This did not match my personal experience or the experiences of the majority of my students. Although the journey was harder for us as first-generation college students and students

of color, most of our parents, within their means and capabilities, contributed to our success.

Having the privilege to work with McNair Scholars, inspirational young people who aspire to one day attain a PhD, I began to wonder how their parents felt about their journeys. Through this dissertation I sought to hear the experiences of parents, the people who have been so crucial to the educational success of so many of us. As I write this, I have just returned from attending a conference geared towards Latinos and Native Americans in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Yesterday, inspired by what I was hearing from speakers and students, I reflected on my experience and wrote the following, which I believe clearly underlies my positionality and biases within this topic – it reflects how I feel about parents and their impact on many high achieving, first-generation students of color:

Participating in this conference along my scholars has solidified what I have always felt to be true as well as my passion for this topic. Every student I have talked to and every presenter at this conference, which attracts the best and brightest college students, has talked about their parents as a catalyst for their success, often giving credit to their parents for their accomplishments. These students' parents are an asset and not a deficit. Most parents are motivators and a reason for pursuing goals, dreams and success. They are their children's cheerleaders. They are their drive. Given that parents are such an essential part of these incredible students' success, I want to hear their voices, their own experiences parenting these students. They matter.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW: THE MISSING VOICES OF PARENTS

### Introduction

This literature review provides an overview of the research and topics significant to this dissertation. This chapter contains (a) an assessment of information pertinent to the Latino/a population with a focus on educational achievement, (b) an examination of Latino/a first-generation college students, (c) a survey of the ‘parent’ phenomenon in higher education and an exploration of the literature that relates to parents and college students, and finally, (d) research on Latino/a parents and their role in their children’s education.

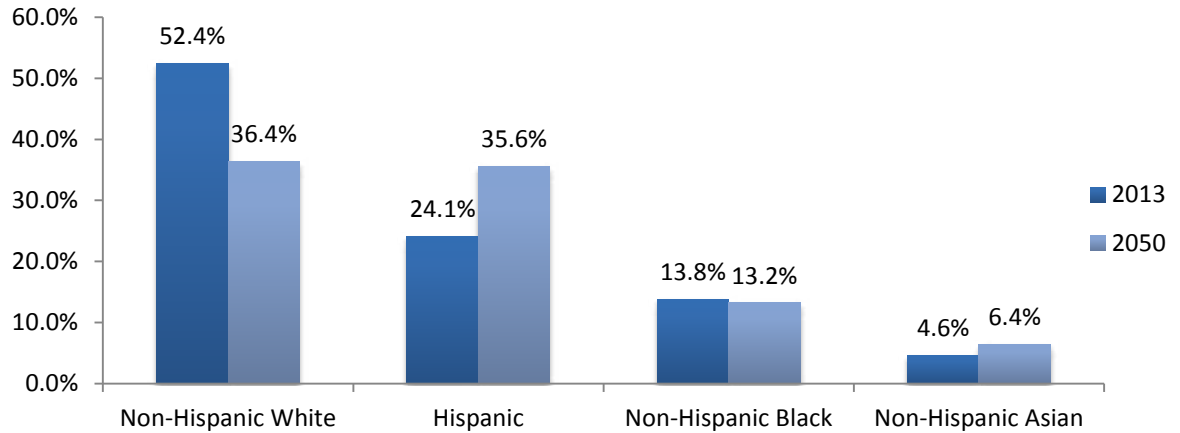
The vastness, diversity, and changing nature of the Latino/a population in the United States makes it impossible to conduct a truly comprehensive literature review that represents each and every experience or gives a voice to all important topics and characteristics that could be examined within this population. Despite this limitation, in this chapter I sought to provide a holistic picture of the population’s general characteristics, delving into research that focused on the role of Latino/a parents in the lives of first-generation college students throughout their academic journeys.

### Socioeconomic and Political Characteristics of the Latino/a Population

Statistics, data, and information highlighted in this section provide an overview of the population encompassed in this dissertation. Although all the study participants were parents of high achieving first-generation Latino/a students pursuing doctorates, they

differed from one another in terms of country of origin, reason for immigrating, employment status, and other variables. Given the fluid nature of population data and predictions, immigration trends, and within-group differences, the data presented in this section comprised only a snapshot in time, made with the best information currently available.

Latinos/as make up a significant and rapidly growing portion of the US population. In 2014, there were approximately 55 million Latinos/as residing in the United States, accounting for about 17% of the total U.S. population (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Stepler & Brown, 2016). By 2060, Latinos/as are expected to comprise close to 29% of the overall population (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Stepler & Brown, 2016; U. S. Census Bureau, 2014). The projected increase in the Latino/a population is even more striking when examining the growth in school age students. As shown in Figure 2, in 2013, almost 25% of children in the country were Latino/a; by 2050, one in three children will be Latino/a, accounting for approximately the same percentage of children as non-Hispanic Whites (Murphey et al., 2014).



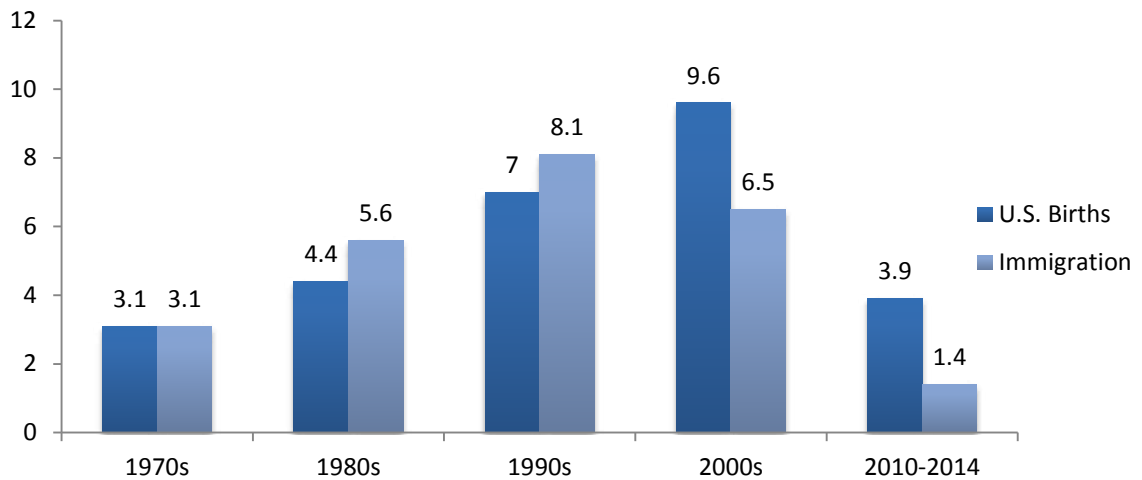
*Note.* Adapted from *America's Hispanic Children: Gaining Ground, Looking Forward*, by D. Murphey, L. Guzman, & A. Torres, 2014, Bethesda, MD: Child Trends Hispanic Institute.

*Figure 2.* Percentage of U.S. children by race/Hispanic origin, 2013 and projected 2050.

Although immigration propelled the exponential growth of the U.S. Latino/a population between 1980 and 2000 (from 4.2 million to 14.1 million), since 2000 the main source of growth for this population has been native births. Between 2000 and 2010, there were 6.5 newly arrived immigrants per 9.6 births of Latinos/as in the United States. This trend of Latino/a births surpassing immigration has since continued (Stapler & Brown, 2015), as shown in Figure 3. Data shows that 48% of Latino/a students were born in the United States to immigrant parents, while only 17 % were immigrants themselves. Approximately 35% of Latino/a children have parents who were born in the United States (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). The rapid increase of the Latino/a population is projected to substantially affect the composition of the future U.S. population. Therefore, understanding the unique characteristics of this population and the factors that may

support their academic achievement and overall social and academic success is crucial for the country's continued prosperity.

When discussing Latino/a immigration, the issue of undocumented immigration often comes to mind. Passel and Cohn's (2009) Pew Research Center Report highlighted that Latinos/as comprised about 76% of all undocumented immigrants to the United States. Passel and Cohn also noted that approximately 50% of unauthorized immigrants resided with their children. Importantly, the overwhelming majority of children of undocumented immigrants, (73%), were born in the United States and, thus, are U.S. citizens. Approximately 6.8% of students in the K-12 system in 2009 had at least one undocumented parent (Passel & Cohn, 2009).



*Note.* In Millions, by sources and decade. Adapted from “Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States,” by R. Stepler & A. Brown.

*Figure 3.* Sources of Hispanic population growth by decade.

The Latino/a population residing in the United States is not monolithic. Torres (2004) noted that although Latinos/as share “a common language, a legacy of Spanish colonization, and a strong focus on family” (p. 6), immigration patterns, reasons for immigrating to the United States, and distinct experiences can vary drastically based on ethnic group (Torres, 2004). U.S. Latinos/as trace their heritage to 20 Spanish-speaking nations. Data gathered from the 2013 American Community Survey showed that individuals of Mexican heritage comprised the most numerous group of Latinos/as in the United States, almost two-thirds. Approximately 9.5% of Latinos/as reported Puerto Rican origin, followed by those who originate from El Salvador (3.7%), Cuba (3.7%), Dominican Republic (3.3%), Guatemala (2.4%), Colombia (2.0%), Honduras (1.5%), Spain (1.4%), Ecuador (1.3%), Peru (1.2%), Nicaragua (.7%), Venezuela (.5%), and Argentina (.5%) (Lopez & Patten, 2015).

Immigrant journeys can vary dramatically from another. Reasons for immigrating to the United States vary with the history, political climate, economy, and general landscape of each country (Durand, Telles, & Flashman, 2006). Historical labor recruitment and established U.S. networks, coupled with economic instability, crime, and corruption have propelled Mexicans to lead the overall Latino/a immigration to the United States (Brick, Challinor, & Rosenblum, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2009). However, immigration from Mexico has steadily declined in recent years, with more immigrants returning to Mexico than coming to the United States since 2009 (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). Puerto Ricans, who make up the second largest group of Latinos/as in the U.S., have generally migrated to the mainland seeking work opportunities and family

reunification. Most recently, the vast economic difficulties facing the island, combined with ease of immigration and established social networks have led to a record number of Puerto Ricans settling in the mainland (Cohn, Patten, & Lopez, 2014; Krogstad, 2015a).

Cubans, residing only 90 miles away from the Florida coast, have historically sought asylum and better opportunities in the United States. Much further away, immigrants from Central America have been driven to the U.S. by extreme poverty, political turmoil, and increasing levels of drug and gang violence. The difficult situation in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, resulted in an unprecedented number of unaccompanied minors arriving at the U.S. through the Mexico-US Border (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Immigrants from South America often have a better financial standing and higher levels of education than other immigrant groups, and leave their countries in search of greater opportunities for upward mobility (Durand et al., 2006; Murphey et al., 2014; Zong & Batalova, 2016). Although this is a very general overview, only reporting on a few of the countries represented by Latinos/as in the U.S., it provides an idea of some of the unique circumstances that have promoted immigration to the United States.

A common incentive for immigrating to the United States is the pursuit of work opportunities that facilitate upward mobility. Although many do find success, for many others the work opportunities they seek do not materialize, and even when they do, they may not provide the financial security imagined. In 2013, Latinos/as made up almost 16% of those employed full-time, and 15% of those with part-time employment. Latinos/as experienced a 7% unemployment rate, higher than Whites (5%) and Asians



(4%); only African Americans had higher levels of unemployment at 11%. In regard to occupations, Latinos/as were underrepresented among those in the highest paying jobs such as management and professional occupations relative to other racial/ethnic groups. Conversely, Latinos/as were overrepresented in the lowest paid occupations such as agricultural work, maintenance work, and housekeeping (Excelencia in Education, 2015).

Latinos/as high representation in low paid occupations explains their overrepresentation among the lower class and poor. In 2013, the median income for Latino/a households was \$40,963, much lower than the overall median income of \$51,949 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015). Data from the 2014 Census Bureau revealed that poverty among Latino/a households (23.5%) was disproportionately high compared to that of White households (9.6%). Moreover, 62% of Latino/a children were from low-income families making less than two times the federal poverty level. Approximately one-third of Latino/a children lived in poverty, and one in eight in deep poverty, with families making less than half the official poverty level (Murphey et al., 2014).

A report by Fry and Gonzalez (2008) highlighted that 28% of Latino/a students who were enrolled in public schools lived in households at or below the national poverty level, compared to 16% of non-Latino/a students (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). Murphey et al. (2014) stated that “Over a third of all Latino children live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, where the preponderance of low educational attainment among adults, lower-quality housing, lower-quality schools, and crime all constrain their opportunities” (p. 10). The difficult conditions facing many Latino/a families may lead parents to experience high levels of worry and concern for their children. Findings from

a 2015 Pew Research Center survey on parents indicated that parents with incomes under \$30,000 had significantly higher levels of concern than parents with incomes above \$75,000 about their children's safety, fearing that they may be victims of violent acts such as kidnapping, beatings and attacks, and shootings. In addition, low-income parents also had higher levels of concern about their children getting into legal trouble, or becoming teenage parents. Low-income parents found it more difficult than higher income parents to identify quality after school programs and activities for their children and were less likely to have their children enrolled in extracurricular activities.

Deficiencies in English language proficiency may be a barrier for some Latinos/as seeking upward mobility; however a growing number of Latinos/as report being proficient in the language. A report by the Pew Research Center (2015) highlighted that 33.2 million Latinos/as, approximately 68% of all Latinos/as 5 years of age and older, were proficient in English. This was an increase of 9 percentage points from 2000 (Krogstad, Stepler, & Lopez, 2015). Although 68% of all Latinos/as reported having high English proficiency, according to Stepler and Brown (2016), when exclusively examining the data for foreign-born Latinos/as, just 34.2% purported to speak English at home or speak English very well. Over a period of 13 years, the percentage of Latinos/as five years of age and older who speak Spanish at home declined, from 78% in 2000, to 73% in 2013 (Kogstad et al., 2015).

Low educational attainment rates are the most troubling explanation for the poverty and high unemployment rates faced by Latinos/as. Latinos/as have the lowest educational attainment of all racial/ethnic groups highlighted in the 2015 U.S. Census

Bureau data (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). Although 88% of all adults (25 and older) in the United States completed at least high school, Latinos/as lagged significantly behind at 66.7%. Latinos/as' associate degree attainment rates stood at 22.7%, compared to 32.4% for Blacks, 46.9% for Whites, and 60.4% for Asians. A similar pattern holds true for bachelor degree attainment, with only 15.5% of Latinos/as completing at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 22.5% for Blacks, 36.2% for Whites, and 53.9% for Asians. Finally, only 4.7% of all Latinos/as 25 years of age and older have completed an advanced degree, compared to 8.2% for Blacks, 13.5% for Whites, and 21.4% for Asians (Ryan & Bauman, 2016).

Given the heterogeneity of the Latino/a population residing in the U.S., there are internal disparities in academic achievement among this population. A Pew Research Center analysis of the 2013 American Community Survey data showed that rates of Latino/a attainment vary sharply by country of origin. Latinos of Salvadorian, Honduran, Guatemalan, and Mexican origins are the least likely to have a college degree (8%, 9%, 9%, and 10% respectively), and Venezuelans are the most likely to have completed college (51%), followed by Argentineans (41%), Colombians (33%), Spaniards (32%), Peruvians (25%) and Cubans (25%). Similarly, Guatemalans, Hondurans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans are the most likely to live in poverty (between 26%-28%), and Argentinians, Peruvians, and Spaniards are the least likely (11%-13%) (Lopez & Patten, 2015).

Though each individual story varies, this general information begins to paint, in broad strokes, a picture of the population that was examined in this study. The parents

who participated in this study had not completed a bachelor's degree, something that based on the data explored, makes them part of the approximately 85% of Latinos/as who have not achieved that milestone. Their children, who are pursuing doctoral degrees, would be part of the less than 1% of Latinos/as with such a degree (Excelencia in Education, 2015). Participants originate from a variety of countries, which may be inextricably linked to the immigration story that they, their children, or those who came before them, carry. On the other hand, very unique circumstances may have brought them or their ancestors to the U.S. What is clear is that the data revealed high levels of poverty, unemployment, and low-skilled labor within this population. Though this may or may not be the situation for the parents who participated in this study, these data contextualize the importance of understanding factors that may affect academic achievement and success. As explained in the ensuing sections of this literature review, parents are an important part of the puzzle.

### First-Generation Latino/a Students

As the previous section highlights, the educational attainment among the Latino/a population has been dismal. Though Latinos/as lag behind other groups in many educational attainment measures, educators, think tanks, non-profits, and others have sought to find ways to change the dire situation facing this population. This section focuses on the young people who can change the status quo, potentially becoming the first in their families to complete college and beyond, thereby setting a new course for the Latino/a community. It highlights current data on Latino/a students and explores

research on first-generation college students with a focus on Latinos/as. Because parents were the focus of this dissertation, this section examines research on the role that parents play in the educational path of Latino/a and first-generation college students.

Recent data show positive trends in Latino/a educational milestones, indicating possible future gains in the educational attainment of this population. More Latino/a children are part of early education programs, and Latino/a student performance in national assessments has been improving (Murphey et al., 2014). Moreover, although Latino/a high school dropout rates remain the highest of all racial/ethnic groups, Census Bureau data released in 2014 showed that Latino/a dropout rates have reached an all-time low, with only 14% of 18-24 year olds having dropped out vs. 32% in 2000 (Fry, 2014; Krogstad, 2015b). Even more promising, in 2012, 69% of all Latino/a high school graduates enrolled in college the fall immediately following graduation, compared to 67% of White high school graduates (Fry & Taylor, 2013), making Latinos/as the largest minority group on college campuses (Krogstad, 2015b). Unfortunately, these enrollment gains have not yet translated into equivalent bachelor degree attainment rates among this population. Though the population of 25 to 29-year-old Latinos/as with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by seven percentage points from 1995-2014, the attainment gap between Whites and Latinos/as also widened considerably during this period, from 18 to 26 percentage points. Whites had reached a bachelor degree attainment rate of 41% by 2014, compared to only 15% for Latinos/as (Kena et al., 2015; Krogstad, 2015b).

Similarly, although there have been improvements in the percentage of Latinos/as receiving graduate degrees, their overall attainment has lagged. According to Kena et al.

(2015), the attainment gap between White and Latino/a 25-29 year olds with at least a master's degree widened, from four percentage points in 1995 (6% for Whites; 2% for Latinos/as) to six percentage points in 2014 (9% for Whites; 3% for Latinos/as). In the past 10 years, increases in Latino/a doctoral degree completion have been higher than any other racial/ethnic groups. Doctoral degrees attained by Latinos/as increased by 67%, compared to 56% for African Americans, 49% for Asians, and 32% for Whites (Excelencia in Education, 2015). Despite that significant improvement, Latinos/as still lagged behind other groups in the overall attainment of doctoral degrees (Excelencia in Education, 2015).

Researchers postulate that Latinos/as have low attainment rates because they are more likely to have parents without a college education, come from disadvantaged communities, and have a low socio-economic status (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008; Murphey et al., 2014; Reyes & Nora, 2012). In addition, these students often enroll in two-year institutions or less selective institutions that are close to home. Though attending associate level and less selective institutions is a risk factor associated with failure to attain a degree, it enables them to reside with parents and fulfill family responsibilities (Desmond & Lopez Turley, 2009; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Excelencia in Education, 2015; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004).

As record numbers of Latino/a students enroll in institutions of higher education, a large portion of them will become the first in their families to pursue and ideally, complete, a bachelor's degree. In 2008, Fry and Gonzalez reported that a total of 34% of Latino/a students who attended public schools reported that their parents did not have a

high school diploma, compared to 7% of non-Latino/a students' parents. These statistics were even more alarming when looking solely at immigrant Latino/a students. Fifty percent of them lived with a parent who did not finish high school. For students who were born in the U.S. to immigrant parents, the percentage decreased to 42%, and to 16% for students whose parents or additional generations were born in the country (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). Data also showed that in 2012, Latino/a children in two-parent households had the highest percentage of parents who had not completed high school compared to any other racial or ethnic group studied. The same was true for Latino/a children who resided in single-parent households (Kena et al., 2015). For the purpose of this study, the term first-generation college student included all those children whose parents did not complete a bachelor's degree. This is in accordance with the Federal Trio definition of the term (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). However, it is important to keep in mind that literature also defines a first-generation college student as one whose parents never enrolled in post-secondary education (Reyes & Nora, 2012; Warburton, Burgarin, & Nunez, 2001).

Low-income Latino/a students whose parents do not have a bachelor's degree face significant challenges in the higher education arena, as they embody an intersection of characteristics that present barriers to their educational pursuits (Tate et al., 2015). First-generation, low-income college students represent approximately 24% of the college student population (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Citing National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, Engle and Tinto (2009) reported that first-generation and low-income college students were four times as likely to drop out of college in their first year

as students who did not have these risk factors. In fact, researchers have shown that family income, racial/ethnic background, and parental educational attainment are factors that can significantly impact the academic achievement of students (Engle & Tinto, 2009; Tate et al., 2015; Wei, Ku, & Liao, 2011). Minorities have been disproportionately represented among first-generation college students, as have been students from low-income backgrounds, those born in another country, and those who reside in households where a second language is primarily spoken (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Researchers have demonstrated that the level of parental education predicts student college enrollment, experience, and completion (Pascarella et al., 2004; Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella & Nora, 1996). Students with parents who attended college tend to have higher levels of social and cultural capital, meaning that they have greater access to informational, financial, and social resources. These resources provide students of college-educated parents with an advantage in pursuing, navigating and completing college. In contrast, first-generation college students have a more challenging educational journey due to their lack of social and cultural capital, including a lack of access to relational networks to help guide them through higher education (Pascarella et al., 2004; Saenz et al., 2007).

In addition, first-generation college students have been more likely to delay entry into college, choose a college due to its proximity to home, attend community colleges or for-profit institutions, choose less selective institutions, reside off-campus, and work-full time, factors which have been associated with lower degree attainment levels (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004). Researchers have determined that first-generation



college students are less likely to pursue and complete a college degree than children of college educated parents (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella et al., 2004; Saenz et al., 2007). Pell Institute data from a 2011 longitudinal study showed that only 10.9% of low-income, first-generation students in the study completed their intended bachelor's degrees, compared to 54% of students who were neither low-income nor first-generation in college.

Gibbons and Border (2010) examined the college-going expectations of middle school students and how they differed based on background characteristics including first-generation status, race, and ethnicity. Although most students expressed a desire to attend college, students whose parents did not attend college reported lower self-efficacy expectations regarding college attendance, perceived a greater number of barriers, and reported lower levels of parental support than children of parents with college degrees. Additionally, compared to students from other racial/ethnic groups, Latino/a students in the sample had the highest level of perceived barriers to college and reported the lowest positive outcome expectations of going to college (Gibbons & Border, 2010).

Though having parents without college degrees may have a negative impact on students' expectations of attending college (Gibbons & Border, 2010); Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, and Yeung (2007) found that parents play an important role in first-generation college students' decision to attend college. Saenz et al. (2007) explored data collected from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program's (CIRP) Freshman Survey from 1971 to 2005. The authors found that in 2005, first-generation college students were more likely than children of college educated parents to report that they

decided to go to college because their parents wanted them to attend (47% vs. 43%). The authors posited, “These results further suggest that parents may have central roles in shaping first-generation students' orientation for higher education despite their lack of first-hand experience” (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 6). The authors further proposed that the findings invalidated the common perception that parents of first-generation college students do not support their children’s pursuit of a college education.

### Parents in Higher Education

The mainstream narrative tends to depict parents of millennial college students as college educated, helicopter parents who are overinvolved in their children’s academic lives (Daniel, Evans & Scott, 2001; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Taylor, 2006). Although this may be true for a portion of the college going population, it is not an accurate portrayal of all parents—and in fact, this representation renders the experiences of various marginalized communities, including Latinos/as, invisible (Kiyama et al., 2015). This section contains a brief examination of how the mainstream narrative of college parents evolved and an overview of the literature on parent involvement. Though some K-12 literature will be highlighted to provide context, this section is largely focused on research related to college and graduate students, and their parents.

Wartman and Savage’s (2008) in-depth report on parental involvement overviewed the evolution of the concept of ‘helicopter’ parents, which remains the common overarching representation of contemporary college parents. As higher education administrators, faculty, and staff began to notice that the parents of some of

their millennial students were highly involved in various aspects of their children's educational journeys, a new consciousness of the appropriate role of parental involvement began to take shape (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Though academic research had not yet caught up with what was occurring, theories by Howe and Strauss (2000; 2003) presented in the widely circulated books, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* and *Millennials Go to College*, became the popular frameworks through which to understand the phenomenon. Their work, although critiqued as lacking empirical or scholarly merit, helped to explain what educators of traditional-age college students were experiencing (Wartman & Savage, 2008). Howe and Strauss (2003) depicted the parents of millennial college students as overly intrusive and intensely dedicated to ensuring that their children had the best of everything and that their needs and desires were met.

Further entrenching this depiction of college parents in the general consciousness, news outlets such as *ABC News* and *The New York Times* portrayed millennial college parents as ever-present in all aspects of their children's lives. From editing their children's college essays, to checking their bank statements and e-mails, these representations showcased an extreme type of parenting (Kiyama et al., 2015; Wartman & Savage, 2008). Wartman and Savage (2008) observed that these depictions have become so entrenched in our culture that the term 'helicopter parent' is included in *Wikipedia*, and has even evolved to include other terms and interesting definitions such as:

Black Hawk parent – a helicopter parent whose behavior is not only excessive but in some cases unethical (Wikipedia, 2007)—lawnmower parents (mowing down anything in their way), submarine parents (hidden below the surface and popping up to attack when things go wrong), and stealth missiles (arriving under the radar and destroying any obstacle in their path). (Wartman & Savage, 2008, pp. 3-4)

These definitions all suggest a negative connotation to parental involvement, prompting the idea that college parents' extreme behavior should be controlled or managed (Kiyama et al., 2015).

A nuanced picture of the role that parents play in student development emerged as scholarly researchers began to examine parental involvement in relation to millennial college students. Overparenting, characterized by parents who “demonstrate excessive involvement in their children’s lives and apply developmentally inappropriate parenting tactics by failing to allow for levels of autonomy suitable to their child’s age” (Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, Bauer, & Murphy, 2012, p. 238), has been linked to overall negative effects on young adults’ well-being. Increased levels of depression, anxiety, stress, entitlement, and substance abuse have been associated with overparenting (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Segrin et al., 2012).

On the other hand, researchers have also illuminated the importance of parental expectations, support, attachment, and encouragement in helping students develop their educational aspirations and achieve their educational goals (Gándara, 1995; Kiyama et al., 2015; Kolkhorst, Yazedjian, & Toews, 2010). Kolkhorst, Yazedjian, & Toews (2010) found a positive relationship between GPA and parental attachment in Latina, White, and

Black women who attended a commuter institution of higher education. In addition, perceived social support from parents and strong connections with parents have also been found to have a positive effect on academic performance (Cutrona et al, 1994; Harper, Sax, & Wolf, 2012; Kiyama et al., 2015; Kolkhorst et al., 2010).

Strong parent and family networks have been deemed as crucial in promoting the wellbeing of students, increasing positive identity development and preventing destructive behaviors (Brown et al., 2013; Martin, Bureau, Cloutier, & Lafontaine, 2011). Furthermore, parental support may contribute to students' perceived self-sufficiency as well as facilitate students' adjustment to college (Brown et al., 2013; Kolkhorst et al., 2010). In addition, Plageman and Sabina (2010) found that there was a positive correlation between student persistence and family support.

Research on first-generation college students and racial/ethnic minority students has shown positive outcomes related to higher levels of parental involvement and attachment. Harper et al. (2012) found that college students within specific identities (Black, Chinese, working class) had higher satisfaction with their social experience in college when they believed that their parents were academically supportive and involved in their lives. Similarly, Melendez and Melendez (2010) found that the influence of parental support on White, Black, and Latina community college women was important to their academic and emotional adjustment as well as institutional attachment.

### Latino/a Parents and Education

The role that Latino/a parents play in the educational journeys of their children has been speculated upon and explored by academicians with various levels of subjectivity and objectivity, as they have sought to decipher the reasons behind the low educational attainment of the Latino/a population. Contradictions in this research abound, as some have connected Latino/a culture and parenting characteristics to low-attainment, but others have proposed that Latino/a parents' high regard for education can be a catalyst for high achievement within this community. This section presents these contradictory perspectives, seeking to provide clarity while acknowledging the complexity of this topic.

#### Latino/a Parents as an Extension of their Children

In the process of writing this dissertation, I was often questioned about choosing to study parents and their experience. For many, especially those outside the Latino/a community, it was difficult to understand why examining Latino/a parents was a worthy endeavor; after all, college students, and more so, graduate students had "left the nest" and parents "need to move on." From the perspective of these critics, parents are not a significant factor in the academic and professional lives of their children after a certain point, at least not one that needs to be examined. Explaining the interconnectedness between a significant percentage of Latino/a parents and their children (well past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays) is a trying endeavor. Culture and lived experiences can be difficult to translate to those whose culture and lived experiences vastly differ. Thus, as an

introduction to research on Latino/a parents, I believed it necessary to briefly explain the immense importance of family within the Latino/a community, where family often plays a primary role in children's actions, decisions, and ultimate paths.

Although the United States has primarily been identified as an individualistic society, Latinos/as, who make up a significant population within this country, are labeled as collectivistic (Rinderle & Montoya, 2008). Individualistic cultures value autonomy, assertiveness, self-fulfillment, choice, and uniqueness, but collectivistic cultures focus on group interdependence through social roles and obligations (Watson, Sherbak, & Morris, 1998). One aspect of collectivism is *familismo*, or familism. Familism refers to the importance of family cohesion and maintaining strong family connections. Family, therefore, is the primary source of support; and loyalty to family and putting family before self are intrinsic expectations (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Halgunseth et al., 2006; Watson et al., 1998). Familism has been identified as a key component of Latino/a culture, where the interests of the family supersede the interests of the individual (Desmond & Lopez Turley, 2009; Durand, 2010; Halgunseth et al., 2006; Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Based on their research, Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995) proposed that “Latinos see the family as the single most important aspect of their lives” (p. 115).

Research on the impact of familism on education has yielded mixed results. Negative effects found to be related to familism include poor academic performance resulting from demands imposed by family obligations, as well as derailment of high achieving students' motivation and ambition due to expectations of conformity with the

status quo (Desmond & Lopez Turley, 2009; Portes, 1998). Researchers have proposed that familism influences the desire to stay close to family, which may affect the choices Latinos/as make in regards to college. Desmond and Lopez Turley's (2009) study on Texas students, based on data from the Texas Higher Education Opportunity Project, found that Latino/a high school seniors with higher education aspirations were more likely than White and Black students to attend community colleges or less selective institutions, instead of four-year or selective colleges. Furthermore, they found that more Latinos/as than Black or White students had foregone applying to college. Desmond and Lopez Turley also noted that compared to Black or White parents and students, Latino/a parents and students were more likely to view living at home as very important. Overall, students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds whose parents did not have college degrees were more likely to feel that living at home was important, but Latinos/as were the most likely to value the importance of living at home during college, regardless of educational level.

Although some researchers have proposed that familism may pose a risk for the achievement of Latinos/as, Latino/a students have been found to benefit from having strong family relationships (Desmond & Turley, 2009). Santisteban, Coatsworth, Briones, Kurtines, and Szapocznik (2012) posited that a strong orientation towards family, as measured by familism, was significantly associated with successful parenting. Moreover, Gloria and Castellanos (2012) and Early (2010) found that family support and encouragement were vital to high achieving Latino/a high school students whose parents did not attend college. Students often noted that the resources, support, and examples



provided by their parents helped lead to their own success. At the college level, Hurtado and Carter (1997) and Hurtado et al. (1996) found that high achieving Latino/a students cited strong, supportive, and sustained relationships with family as essential to their transition and adjustment to college. Reyes and Nora (2012) noted that these findings “suggest that a strong ‘separation’ assumption as held by Tinto (1995) is not a necessary condition for transition and integration in college for Hispanic students” (p. 15).

### Latino/a Parenting Styles

Baumrind (1966, 1989) conceptualized a theory of parenting styles that helps to encapsulate and explain parent-child interactions and their effects on children. Baumrind posited the existence of three parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. In 1983, Maccoby and Martin contributed an additional style: neglectful. Authoritarian parenting denotes that parents place high levels of control and demands on their children; and in order to keep their children in line, they often resort to punishment. Baumrind indicated that these types of parents have high levels of demandingness but low responsiveness to their children. Permissive parents, on the other hand, respect their child’s sense of autonomy and individuality and perceive their children as equals. Children can generally make their own decisions, and few rules that are placed by parents. These parents have low levels of demandingness but high responsiveness to their children. Finally, authoritative parents set clear rules and expectations while acknowledging their children’s autonomy. These parents demonstrate high levels of demandingness as well as high responsiveness. Authoritative is deemed the ideal type of

parenting. Finally, the neglectful parenting style, conceptualized by Maccoby and Martin (1983), denotes disengaged parents who only meet their children's basic physical needs while neglecting their emotional needs. These parents have low demandingness and low responsiveness.

There is no clear delineation of the typical Latino/a parenting style (Domenech Rodriguez, Donovanick, & Crowley, 2009). Domenech et al. (2009) conducted a study that assessed the parenting style dimensions that a sample of Latino/a parents exhibited. They specifically looked at warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting. Latinos/as who participated in the study rated high on warmth and medium to low on autonomy granting. In regard to parenting styles, approximately 61% of Latino/a parents were labeled protective, a label granted to parents who scored high on warmth as well as demandingness and low on autonomy granting. A total of 31% of parents were found to be authoritative and none were labeled authoritarian. The authors posited that only one-third of Latino/a parents fit into the traditional parenting styles categories (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful). They concluded based on their findings that these traditional categories do not accurately capture the parenting styles of Latinos/as.

Although researchers have not been able to identify a single parenting style that can be generalized to the entire population (Domenech et al., 2009), it is the authoritarian parenting style that has been the most culturally attributed to Latinos/as (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Various researchers have found that although the authoritative parenting style seems to be most lauded for promoting academic achievement in White children, the same association does not hold true for Latino/a children (Park & Bauer,

2002; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Park and Bauer (2002) found that parental strictness, associated with authoritarian parenting, was positively correlated with academic achievement for Latino/a youth. Gándara and Contreras (2009) explained that the rigidity and inflexible boundaries that typify the authoritarian parenting style may keep many low-income Latino/a children safe when they reside in less secure, high-risk urban environments. In effect, many minority students from low-income backgrounds have attributed their academic success to not being allowed to “hang out” with their neighborhood peers or join in their activities, which propelled them to focus on school and family (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

In direct contradiction to the previously described studies, other researchers found that, like their White counterparts, Latino/a students benefit most from the authoritative parenting style (Jabaghourian, Sorkhabi, Quach, & Strage, 2014; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Steinberg et al. (1992) concluded that authoritative parenting styles were positively related to Latino/a youth’s academic achievement. Further, they proposed that the high incidence of authoritarian parenting styles within Latino/a families might hinder the academic achievement of Latino/a students. Similarly, in her study on women with doctoral degrees, Gándara (1982) also concluded that a common theme among her successful participants was that their parents used a non-authoritarian parenting style. Jabaghourian et al. (2014), found a positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and higher grades, self-regulation, social competence, among other positive traits; conversely, they found a negative relationship between the authoritative parenting style and less desirable traits including aggression.

### Latino/a Parents: A Deficit for Students?

A narrative of cultural deficit has been used to justify the achievement gap between Latino/a students and White students. In this narrative, the cultural environment, habits, and activities attributed to the success of White students represent the ideal to be emulated. On the other hand, familial and personal characteristics attributed to Latinos/as have been used to explain this population's low attainment levels (Matos, 2015; Valencia & Black, 2002).

An early cultural deficit narrative was proposed by Thomas Sowell in his 1981 book, *Ethnic America: A History*, which largely blamed parents for the low academic attainment of Latino/a students. Sowell concluded that Mexicans did not care about education and substantiated that statement by highlighting the low attainment rates of Latinos/as residing in the southwestern United States compared with other racial/ethnic groups; thus, effectively blaming low achievement on lack of parental/cultural support for education (Sowell, 1981; Valencia, 2011). Since, much of the literature has continued to point to personal and parental characteristics associated with Latinos/as, such as first-generation status, speaking English as second language, low parental involvement, and lack of cultural capital, as largely to blame for this group's at-risk status (Ceja, 2004; Matos, 2015; Valencia and Black, 2002; Valencia & Solorzano, 1997).

Generalizing that parents have been largely to blame for the low attainment levels of Latino/a students is not only simplistic, but also dangerous (Matos, 2015). As Matos (2015) stated, "Since this burden is placed on communities of color and not on institutional policies, practices, and pedagogies, schools are excused from taking

accountability for the educational equity and inclusion of all of their students” (p. 437). However, it would also be disingenuous not to examine the realities that connect culture, family, and socioeconomics, which may have a negative effect on the overall attainment of Latinos/as.

As Gándara and Contreras (2009) observe, many minority and low-income parents have neither the resources nor the social and cultural capital necessary to endow their children with the support systems necessary to help them achieve their academic or professional aspirations. Moreover, parents with low educational levels, limited economic resources, and/or different cultural values, as in the case of Latino/a parents, may not have the knowledge or ability to help manage their child’s experience within the school system. This, in turn, may leave their children with fewer opportunities and further obstacles to overcome than their White, middle- and upper-class counterparts (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Lack of parental involvement and academic guidance in their children’s academic journeys has been highlighted as a key reason for the low educational attainment of Latino/a youth. There seems to be some ambiguity as to the role that Latino/a parents play in supporting their children’s educational goals. For example, Lopez (2009) reported that 61% of Latino adults (26 years of age or older) believed that a major reason why Latino/a youth do not perform as well as other groups is because Latino/a parents “do not play an active role in helping their children succeed” (p. 4). In contrast, 65% of young Latinos/as, 16-25, strongly agreed “that their parents play or played an active role in their education” (p. 5).

Stevenson, Chen, and Uttal (1990) commented that Latino/a parents have an internalized ambivalence about their own capacity to provide academic assistance to their children. Subsample interviews of 968 Latino/a, White and Black mothers of a representative sample of first- to fifth-grade Chicago students indicated that minority mothers placed more importance on their children's academic achievement than White mothers. However, although Latino/a mothers wanted to help their children academically, they felt less capable to contribute to the academic achievement of their child than White and Black mothers (Stevenson et al., 1990).

Similarly, in a qualitative study of Latino/a students who successfully matriculated in college, Zalaquett (2005) found that parents were supportive of participants' educational aspirations, but provided very little guidance in regard to educational choices. Cited reasons as to why parents could not provide guidance included language barriers and lack of knowledge about the educational system. Despite this, participants in Zalaquett's study reported that family support was a major contributor to their educational success. Parents provided participants with motivation and support not only by stressing the importance of education, but also by telling them stories about their own struggles because of their lack of education.

Reporting similar findings, Arellano and Padilla (2006), who interviewed 30 undergraduate Latino/a students enrolled in selective institutions, noted that although the parents of many of their participants did not have the academic experience or resources to help in traditional ways (such as assistance with homework or contacting teachers), they provided their children with encouragement and verbal support. In fact, the authors

asserted that all the parents were involved in promoting their children's academic success in different ways, including talking to their children about their academic progress; reading to their children, often in Spanish, to promote literacy; creating rules and structure so their children would complete their homework; and making personal sacrifices so their children could focus in school and not have to work (p. 494). Similarly, Durant (2010) found that while Mexican mothers were unsure of their ability to help their children academically, due to their own limited schooling and lack of English proficiency, they still sought to be engaged in their children's academic development by teaching, reading, or providing them with rules to encourage them to complete their homework.

Zarate (2007) conducted an in-depth examination of the concept of parental involvement as constructed by schools, Latino/a students, and Latino/a parents. Zarate found that school staff (teachers, counselors, and principals) viewed parental involvement as more directly related to activities where parents interacted with schools and communicated with educators. Activities mentioned included joining parent-teacher organizations, participation in school communities, attending open houses, volunteering in school fundraising events, etc. Latino/a parents frequently cited work obligations and inflexible schedules as a reason for lack of direct involvement with schools. Some parents also noted that unless there was a problem with their children, they did not see a reason to contact the school. Finally, some parents believed that school policies did not promote parental involvement (Zarate, 2007).

In contrast, for Latino/a parents, parental involvement comprised academic involvement and life participation. Academic involvement encompassed activities such as helping with homework, providing educational enrichment, and promoting academic performance. Life participation denoted providing a life education that positively impacted academic achievement. Zarate (2007) reported that Latino/a parents described more examples of life participation than academic involvement. Parents believed that being involved in their child's lives, and ensuring appropriate moral guidance, promoted the type of positive behavior and relationships that would translate into academic learning. In this way, parents believed that they contributed to the learning that occurred in the schools (Zarate, 2007). Halgunseth et al. (2006) explained that the term *educación* encompasses not only formal education (as in the English term), but also moral and interpersonal training. Children are deemed as *educados* when they reflect the good manners and moral values connected with this term including "warmth, honesty, politeness, respectfulness, and responsibility" (Halgunseth et al., 2006, p. 1286).

Students who comprised Zarate's (2007) study also viewed their parents' non-academic support as parental involvement. All of the interviewed students were college bound, and they all indicated that the parents' involvement promoted their academic success. Some of the involvement that students highlighted included "telling contrasting stories of examples of failures and successes", "giving general encouragement", "providing discipline", and "offering incentives/disincentives for proper behavior", among others (Zarate, 2007, p. 14). Like other researchers, Zarate (2007) found that Latino/a parents sought to help their children with homework, but believed that language



barriers or lack of formal education made them ill equipped to provide the academic support their children needed in this area. They balanced this by ensuring that their children finished their homework or by inquiring about homework, even if they could not help directly.

Although parental involvement is typically conceived as the active participation of parents in activities that directly support academic achievement within the formal education system, a more inclusive meaning would incorporate all the ways through which parents make a positive impact on their children's lives that contribute to student achievement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). Guerra and Nelson explained that national standards laud parent involvement characteristics (such as volunteering at school, starting conversations with teachers, attending PTA meetings) that do not always match the behaviors, values, and culture by which Latino/a parents support their children or involve themselves in their children's education. Reviewing 20 years (1990-2010) of literature on Latino/a parent involvement, Guerra and Nelson (2013) concluded:

Latino parents are involved and supportive of their children's education in numerous ways, but their involvement, often unrecognized by educators, is misunderstood or viewed as nonexistent. Although Latino parent involvement behaviors may differ from behaviors traditionally associated with parent involvement, 'different' does not mean 'uninvolved,' 'uncaring,' 'unsupportive,' or any other deficit construct. 'Different' means 'not the same' —not less than, not better, just different." (p. 449)

### Latino/a Parents: Conduits to Success?

Despite the barriers that many Latino/a parents face in providing traditionally recognized academic support to their children, researchers have found that Latino/a parents believe that education is fundamental for their children's success (Arellano & Padilla, 2006; Lopez, 2009; Stevenson et al., 1990). In fact, many accounts demonstrate that recent immigrants highly value the role that higher education plays in promoting upward mobility; and many times the opportunity to have their children access education is a major reason for families making the difficult journey to the United States (Carger, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Reese, 2002). The privilege of living in the United States, and having access to resources that other family members from their country do not have, propels them to strive to succeed economically and academically (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995).

Gonzalez, Stein, Shannonhouse, and Prinstein (2012) conducted a qualitative study focused on academic/career aspirations of seventeen 10<sup>th</sup>-grade Latino/a students from immigrant communities. These researchers found that participants gained emotional support from their families to reach their educational/career goals. Students were motivated to succeed for varied reasons including “wanting to make their parents proud, wanting to be the first in the family to graduate from college, wanting to be in a position to provide for future offspring in a way that their parents could not, not wanting to disappoint family, and hearing messages at home such as ‘don’t be like me’” (Gonzalez et al., 2012, p. 92). Other researchers have shown that the desire to help

support and provide for their families drives students to pursue a higher education (Boden, 2011; Borrero, 2011).

Arellano & Padilla (2006) found that regardless of the level of parental academic attainment, Latino/a students expressed that their parents “were the most influential motivating factor, and continued to be the main impetus for succeeding in their undergraduate studies” (p. 493). Similarly, Ceballo (2002), in a qualitative study of Latino/a students attending an Ivy League institution, found that parents’ commitment to education, support for students’ autonomy, and non-verbal support of students’ educational attainment goals were key in facilitating students’ academic path. Echoing these studies, nationally representative data indicated that Latino/a parents were primary supporters of their children’s educational achievement. Lopez (2009) reported that approximately 77% of Latinos/as ages 16-25 who participated in a 2009 Pew Hispanic Center national study indicated that “their parents think going to college is the most important thing to do after high school” (p. 3). Only 11% reported that their parents considered getting a full-time job to be the most important post-high school accomplishment.

Literature on Latino/a parent involvement consistently reports that the use of *consejos* is a key practice Latino/a parents implement to provide guidance and support to their children (Auerbach, 2006, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Alfaro et al., 2014). Delgado-Gaitan (1994) explained that, “in Spanish, *consejos* implies a cultural dimension of communication sparked with emotional empathy and compassion, as well as familial expectations and inspiration” (p. 300). Ceja (2004) emphasized the role of *consejos*,

positing that the social, cultural, and labor struggles faced by Mexican parents in his study influenced their daughters' educational pathways and served as a source of strength. These lived experiences were shared through *consejos* with the purpose of encouraging their daughters to achieve academically in order to succeed. These *consejos* were key factors in participants' aspirations to attend college. Ceja proposed that having the ability to reinterpret the challenges their parents faced, seeing them as knowledge that can be used to avoid similar circumstances and as drivers to help them advance through the educational system, creates in these students a heightened sense of educational resiliency. Similarly, Auerbach (2006; 2007) highlighted *consejos* as a common strategy utilized by Latino/a parents to transmit the value of education to their children. Alfaro et al. (2014) went a step further and examined the use of *consejos* by an academically successful immigrant family. The authors identified optimism, determination, disposition, and motivation as key themes of *consejos* that reverberated through the narrative of interviewed student. These types of *consejos* provided guidance and inspiration for the student to achieve academic success. According to Gándara (1995), parents of Latino/a students create a culture of possibility by supporting and encouraging their children's academic aspirations, and their consistent messages and *consejos* highlight the importance of education in achieving upward mobility.

Ceja (2004) examined how first-generation Chicana college students perceived their parents' influence on their educational aspirations and whether parents played a role in student resiliency. The author found that all 20 students interviewed mentioned their parents as crucial to their educational aspirations and their academic success. Some

parents promoted education as a vehicle to shield their children from facing some of the same obstacles they had faced, often sharing cautionary tales, a subset of *consejos*. These parental messages and experiences became sources of motivation and resiliency for students, encouraging them to pursue and attain a college education. Reporting similar findings, Sanchez, Reyes, and Singh (2005) utilized a social capital framework to explore the role that significant relationships had on the academic experiences of Mexican American first-generation college students. Students most frequently cited their parents as key sources of support and motivating agents.

In a series of articles based on a three-year study, Auerbach (2002, 2004, 2006, 2007) examined the personal narratives of working class parents of color. Most of the parents who participated in Auerbach's study were Mexican immigrants with a few being immigrants from Central America, Chicanos/as born in the United States, and African Americans. Parents who participated in the study had children who were part of a college access program (Futures Project) in a high school within the Los Angeles metropolitan area. A common theme in Auerbach's (2002, 2004, 2006, 2007) articles was parents' support for their children's college goals. In general, parents believed that they provided encouragement for their children's academic aspirations. Some parents, whom Auerbach (2006, 2007) labeled as moral supporters, provided encouragement and emotional support to their children, who tended to be high achieving. Based on their children's motivation, these parents trusted their children to take the right steps towards college. *Consejos* were an important component of providing guidance and moral support for their children. Another group of parents, the advocates, took more tangible steps toward their children's

educational attainment such as monitoring their children's academic progress and advocating for the resources their children needed within the school system. While using techniques like *consejos*, these parents believed that they needed to provide their children with more hands-on support to promote their success. Their children tended to be less self-motivated than the children of the moral supporters. Finally, a third group of parents, ambivalent companions, supported their children's aspirations but also worried the impact that moving away from college would have on their parent-child relationship and other familial bonds (Auerbach, 2007)

Another theme that arose from Auerbach's (2002, 2006, 2007) examination was that parents used their own experiences as cautionary tales, to warn their children not to follow in their own footsteps. Parents who attended the same high school, a community college, or university worried that their children would face the same barriers/obstacles that they did. Furthermore, parents discussed "pushing" their children to do their homework or focus on academics because they believed they had not been pushed enough when they were younger, which led to their lack of educational attainment. Auerbach (2006, 2007) also illustrated the concept of *ganas* (will, drive to succeed). Parents in her study reported that for students to be successful they must have *ganas*, the will to achieve their goals; otherwise there is not much the parent can do.

Auerbach (2004) noted that parents in her study worried about the finances associated with their children attending college and continuously sought information related to cost, financial aid, and student loans. Hearing from counselors, college students, and others who were familiar with the financial aid process, many of the parents

became aware of all the financial help available for their children. The study also documented parents' fear of letting their children go away for college. A Guatemalan father shared: "Latinos don't like for their children to go far away where we lose sight of them or can't help them if they need it. So to us, it will be better if our daughter goes to one of the closer universities" (p. 132).

Although Auerbach's (2006, 2007) articles focused on the narratives of high school parents, her 2004 study highlighted narratives from parents of college students who shared their experiences during a college access program meeting. Their narrative provides some insight regarding the experience of Latino/a parents of college students:

Mother: It was difficult to hear he was going away to college. I didn't want him to go far, but I knew we had to accept it.

Father: Since he was little, we tried to stress the importance of studying.

Education was always the priority. I was worried when he chose to go to UCSC— we couldn't afford it, we had to get a loan. But it's paid off because my son has started out working at a higher income than I ever had in 20 years...

(Auerbach, 2004, p. 131-132)

Another parent with three children who had attended Yale, UCLA, and the University of Southern California, shared: "When you see your children graduate from college, I can compare it to giving birth. I can't describe the happiness. All the parents are crying. You are so proud of them and all the sacrifices they made" (p. 133).

Matos (2015) examined the cultural assets that Latinos/as draw upon when pursuing college. Matos found that parents of Latino/a students in her study provided

their children with aspirational capital, as they consistently encouraged and motivated their children to achieve academically. In addition, she found that family members or other support systems provided familial capital to these students, transferring values and providing support for their success. Students highlight these two forms of capital as instrumental in their pursuit of a higher education. Matos proposed that her findings led to the identification of a new form of cultural capital, “finishing.” “Finishing” connects aspirational and familial capital by forming in the students the impetus to complete or finish college in order to “contribute to the legacy of their families and as a way to repay the sacrifices of their parents” (p. 446).

#### Parents and Latino/a Graduate Students

Although the majority of research on first-generation and Latino/a students in higher education focuses on undergraduates, a number of researchers have sought to examine the experiences of graduate students within these populations. Only about 57% of all PhD students complete their degrees in 10 years and completion rates are even lower for Latinos/as and first-generation college students. Given that researchers have repeatedly found that family support is critical for the transition and success of these populations of graduate students (Achor & Morales, 1990; González, Marin, Figueroa, Moreno, & Navia, 2002; Gándara, 1982; Lerma, Zamarripa, Oliver, & Cavazos Vela, 2015; Sowell et al., 2015) understanding how parents influence their journey provides important insight (Sowell et al., 2015; Sowell, Zhang, Bell, & Redd, 2008). This section



explores research on the role of parents in the Latino/a and first-generation graduate student experience.

Gándara (1982) explored the experiences of 17 Chicana women (aged 28-40) who completed professional and academic doctorates. The women, whose parents did not complete high school and held low-skill jobs, were interviewed using a retrospective instrument. Seeking to find common factors and experiences that these women shared, the author examined 10 different areas of the participants' backgrounds, including child-rearing practices used by their parents. Gándara found that a critical common factor shared by the participants was familial emotional support. Gándara found that participants' parents emphasized hard work, quality of performance, and independent behavior. Parents of most of the participants promoted self-reliance and/or reliance on their family.

In a later study, Gándara (1994) examined the experiences of 50 individuals of Mexican heritage, female and male who, despite coming from low-income backgrounds and being first-generation college students, successfully attained professional and academic doctoral degrees. These findings added to and reinforced her 1982 study. Similar to the 1982 study, Gándara found that the parents of the participants promoted independence, hard work, and responsibility. In addition, most supported their children's educational goals. Gándara also found that parents shared stories of their own struggles in order to encourage their children's education, provided verbal encouragement, and tried helping them with homework if they could. In one poignant story, a participant shared that when he graduated from the eighth grade, his father took him aside to tell him

that while he had been able to help him academically up to that point, from that point on his son would know more than he, and he could no longer help him. In regard to the environment in which the participants grew up, almost 70% reported having encyclopedias as they were growing up, and 50% stated that at least one parent was an avid reader (Gándara, 1994, p. 15). Some of the participants shared stories of how, despite their low educational attainment, their parents were incredibly smart and self-taught.

Examining the journey of Latino/a doctoral recipients in counselor education, Lerma et al. (2015) conducted a phenomenological study, surveying 23 participants through open-ended questions and conducting in-depth interviews with eight of those participants. Lerma et al. found that all of their study participants had strong family role models. The strong work ethic and drive of parents and family members were cited as motivators to succeed. Moreover, participants also discussed the vital role that parents and family, among other support systems, played in their ability to complete their degree.

Morales' (2013) qualitative study about Puerto Rican women who completed their PhD in education highlighted the key role of parents in these women's persistence through the doctoral process. Participants shared that parents were an important source of support and motivation. In addition, the study highlighted the confidence that parents inculcated in their children. One of the participants in Morales' study stated,

I strongly believe that what drove me to my PhD was the fact that my parents, specifically my mother, never questioned I couldn't obtain the highest degree.

She would always instill a very common Puerto Rican saying, which is whatever

it is you want to be, just be the best in it, and reach the highest that you can.

(Morales, 2013, p.153)

Beyond moral support and instilling self-confidence, Morales also found that parents participated directly in supporting the participants through the doctorate – babysitting grandchildren so their daughters could work on their dissertations, being available to talk with them on the phone during difficult times, or cooking for them so that they could focus on writing.

Researchers have highlighted mothers in particular as being crucial motivators for Latinos/as pursuing graduate degrees (Gándara, 1982, 1994; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006). In an individual narrative, Rosales (2006) reflected on her journey as a doctoral student and wrote of her mother:

Although I am the first in my family to graduate from college and pursue higher education, my mom was instrumental in teaching my sisters and me the value of education. My mom always emphasized that education can never be taken away despite the course of life – the knowledge that I would acquire would always remain with me. Just as important, she always reinforced the value of cultural roots – to know who we are and where we come from and to embrace our Mexican culture. (p. 202).

As with Rosales (2006), Hurtado and Sinha (2006) emphasized the moral support mothers provided to the Latino/a doctoral students in their study. Hurtado and Sinha posited that participants of both genders experienced moral support and affirmation from their mothers. Moreover, although the closeness that Latino/a students had with their

mothers was consistent, authors found that closeness to their fathers varied. A doctoral student in Hurtado and Sinha's study reported, "I speak to my mom almost every day and we're very close. It's the kind of intimacy where, she'll know the minute I'm on the phone what kind of day I'm having...I can go weeks without talking to my father" (p. 164). Hurtado and Sinha explained that the typical pattern of communication for the participants was that they would directly talk to their mothers, and then mothers would update fathers.

Gándara (1982) found that a critical factor for the Chicanas in her study was having mothers as strong role models. Reflecting on this finding, Gándara reported that although a number of researchers described the key role that mothers play in the achievement of middle-class White males, it was commonly assumed that Mexican mothers were passive homemakers. Given this assumption, at the beginning of her study Gándara hypothesized that fathers would have the most significant impact on participants' educational values due to their interactions outside of the home. However, she found that 11 of the 17 participants' mothers held jobs outside of the home and were at least as influential as the fathers with regard to decision making within the home. Furthermore, the study found that mothers were more likely to support their daughters' educational aspirations, and 13 of the 17 female participants reported that their mothers had either been as influential as or more influential than their fathers regarding their educational aspirations. Interestingly, many participants expressed that their mothers wished their daughters to be financially independent; mothers viewed educational attainment as a way to achieve this goal. Similarly, in Gándara's (1994) study, which

looked at both women and men, she found that mothers were substantially more supportive than fathers. One of the participants explained that though his father was, in theory, supportive of education, he wanted his son to work more in order to help with the family's financial needs. Another shared that although her father did not stop her educational ambitions, he did not think that she (or women in general) needed an education because she would eventually marry and be supported by her husband. When fathers were not supportive, mothers would often intercede for their children and encourage education. In effect, Gándara noted that based on her study "Mothers were most often the guiding force in the home behind the children's powerful educational ambitions" (p. 13). Most of the participants reported that "their mothers were the parent who had the greatest influence in setting their educational goals" (p. 13). Many stated that while the father was a figurehead, the mother exerted the most influence and control within the family.

Researchers have also examined gender expectations. Achor and Morales (1990) reported interesting findings in regard to gender stereotypes and norms within the Latino/a community. They sought to examine reproduction theory and predictions of castelike minorities based on a study of 100 Chicanas who attained doctoral degrees at American universities. The authors stressed that ethnographers have tended to depict Mexican American families as socializing daughters to prepare them to be wives and mothers, instead of promoting formal education. Moreover, Achor and Morales noted that cultural ecologists have promoted the notion that parents in subordinated minority groups have hostile views of schools and tend to distrust these institutions, thus, failing to

promote educational success. However, they found that, although 79% of the women described their families as very traditional or somewhat traditional, the majority of participants also reported that their families encouraged them to pursue higher education and supported their academic journeys. Also, almost 42% of the participants reported that family influence was a critical component of their decisions to seek doctoral degrees.

Hurtado and Sinha (2006) also examined gender socialization among Latino/a students. They analyzed previous studies of Latino/a doctoral students and found that there were differences in the ways that parents treated females and males while growing up. Females had stricter curfews, were highly supervised, were expected to abstain from sexual relationships, and had more household chores. On the other hand, males were allowed to be independent, were allowed to date, and did not have to do household chores. However, regardless of these cultural norms, educational achievement was encouraged for both males and females. Though the majority of parents of these students did not have college experience, they provided both males and females varied types of support “such as small amounts of money; affirmation whenever their children succeeded educationally; babysitting when respondents had children; moral support, especially mothers; and working extra jobs to provide money for private schools” (p. 165).

Espinoza (2010) sought to understand how, given cultural norms, Latina graduate students dealt with balancing their education and family responsibilities. Terming this conflict the “good daughter dilemma”, the author found that participants utilized one of two strategies in order to manage their situations. “Integrators” would communicate with their family about their educational responsibilities and ask for their support as they

navigated the journey; on the other hand, “separators” made an active effort to keep their family and educational spheres separate, thus avoiding conflict. These strategies enabled the participants to move through the educational system and manage their family and educational lives.

Although parents are a crucial source of support and motivation for Latino/a graduate students, the majority of Latino/a graduate students are the first in their families to pursue graduate degrees, and this can create a disconnect between students and their parents, leading to challenges for those undertaking the graduate journey (Huber, Huidor, Malagon, Sanchez, & Solorzano, 2006; Torres, 2006). Torres (2006) posited that this disconnect can create cultural conflict for graduate students and can lead them to question their own identity. Students undergoing this cultural conflict may experience guilt given their academic achievement and social standing in comparison to their parents. Moreover, they may feel obligated to their families and guilty when they cannot fulfill this duty.

Gonzalez et al. (2001) explored the experiences of Latino/a doctoral students and concluded that all of the doctoral students in their study were fragile and vulnerable throughout their doctoral journeys. Gonzalez et al. stated, “The image that emerged from their narratives was that each of them were surviving in their programs as if they were made out of glass, holding their breath, in hopes that they would not break before the process was over” (p. 567). One of the elements that Gonzalez found added to this fragile and vulnerable experience was a lack of family understanding. The participants explained that their parents who, for the most part, were unfamiliar with graduate

education, could simply not provide them with the advice, guidance, and understanding they needed during such a difficult time.

Sowell et al. (2015), who authored the Doctoral Initiative on Minority Attrition and Completion report, highlighted that many first-generation doctoral students experience challenges in explaining their academic journey to their family. Sowell et al. posited that, though the support of family members is crucial for doctoral student success, oftentimes this support can be limited because family members do not have experience with post-secondary education, much less with an academic doctoral degree. Thus, while participating doctoral students reported that non-financial support from their families was one of three leading factors that most greatly influenced their ability to complete their degrees, 47% of Latino/a respondents denoted that they rarely or never felt that their family fully supported their educational aspirations.

Holly and Gardner (2012) reported the experiences of doctoral students who were the first in their families to graduate from college. They found that families and communities had an important influence on the educational experience of the participants; however, participants related experiences of feeling that parents and family members did not understand their academic journeys. A Hispanic male explained: “My parents try to be supportive, even though they’re not entirely sure what I’m doing” (p. 118). Other participants discussed similar struggles of trying to explain their journeys to family members, aware that while supportive, family members simply could not relate to their experience.



Leyva (2011) interviewed six female first-generation Mexican-American Master of Social Work graduates in order to examine their experience balancing their professional and ethnic identities. Leyva found that although the majority of the participants received support and encouragement from their parents, some found the participants' college journey difficult to grasp. One of the participants cited by Leyva mentioned, "With regards to thesis work, my mom doesn't understand. She says 'Why can't you get the damn thing done?'" (p. 26). A few of the study participants reported that their parents/families opposed or were apathetic to their educational choices. In most cases, this opposition occurred because parents viewed the immediate need for their children to financially contribute to household needs as a primary concern that was being impeded by their child's college attendance.

Similarly, Gloria and Castellanos (2009) indicated that the strong sense of familism among Latino/a doctoral students might lead them to struggle to balance their education with familial expectations. Their inability to spend time with family, attend important family events or functions, or to provide support when called upon by family members can create a sense of guilt and lead to questioning academic endeavors. Their inability to place family above self creates a lack of value congruency and may lead to retention challenges. Gloria and Castellanos posited that Latino/a students often believe they have to justify their decisions to pursue doctoral education and may feel disconnected or misunderstood by their family members.

Literature presented in this section promotes the concept of Latino/a parents as both conduits for their children's success and as sources of challenge or conflict during

their educational journey. The complexities of socioeconomic background, knowledge of the educational system, social capital, and vast diversity in the Latino/a population, among other factors, make it impossible to neatly place all Latino/a parents in one category. However, based on the data presented as well as various narratives of high achieving Latino/a students examined in this literature review, parents have been repeatedly shown to have important roles in the academic journeys of this particular group of Latino/a students.

### Summary

Through this chapter, I sought to provide a holistic view of the population that was studied in this dissertation in order to ensure that the narratives examined through the rest of the chapters will be understood within the appropriate context. In the first section, I highlighted the data on the unique characteristics of this population within a demographic, social, and economic context. After examining demographic information and data variables, I provided an overview of Latino/a first-generation college students. I then examined first-generation college student research and research on Latino/a students pursuing higher education. The following section explored the population that was at the center of this study, parents. In the last section, I examined Latino/a parents, focusing on the role that these parents play in the lives of college and graduate students.

Literature reviewed in this chapter underscored the role that Latino/a parents play in the educational journey of their children through college and graduate school.

Although this research helps to provide a more complete picture of how Latino/a parents

impact their children, much of what we know has been based on student narratives; when parent voices are examined, the focus is typically on the educational journey of the child. The missing voices of parents has created a gap in the literature that this dissertation seeks to fill. Chapter 3 contains a detailed explanation of the methods and procedures that were followed in conducting the study.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY: LATINO/A PARENTS IN A BODY OF TECHNIQUES

### Introduction

Through this study, I aimed to give a voice to the Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing their PhDs. I examined how these individuals perceived their journeys as parents to high-achieving students and the experiences, emotions, joys, and challenges they faced through their journeys. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology I used in conducting this qualitative phenomenological study.

### Research Design and Rationale

From the time I decided to explore the experiences of Latino/a parents, I knew I would take a naturalistic approach to my study. What attracted me to this topic was the prospect of hearing the narratives of parents' experiences as their children pursued their long academic journey from college to a PhD; thus, qualitative research was the most appropriate method of inquiry. As Creswell (2009) posited, qualitative research "is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Much of what is known about Latino/a parents and their role has been examined through the narratives of their children. Moreover, even when Latino/a parents' voices are heard, they have typically focused on their children's experiences. I conducted individual interviews with parents in order to hear their narratives. In listening to parents' stories and seeking to understand their personal

journeys, I took on a social constructivist worldview, as I assumed that “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experience” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). In line with social constructivism, I realized that my own background added another rich layer to this study: I am a child of Latino/a parents who is pursuing an advanced degree while working with Latino/a students who plan to pursue doctorates. These conditions undoubtedly shaped my interpretation of the research and drove my position in the research (Creswell, 2009).

I decided to conduct phenomenological research because it enabled me to understand the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007, 2009). As Creswell (2007, 2009) stated, this methodology permits the researcher to explore the essence of the human experience. Importantly, compared to other qualitative research approaches (e.g., narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study), utilizing the phenomenological approach was most appropriate for addressing my research problem. Through my study, I sought to find the shared experiences of my study participants, and this aligned with the goal of this methodology. Phenomenology is typically conducted by interviewing various individuals who experienced a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In this case, the phenomenon was the experience of parenting a high-achieving student who was pursuing a PhD. Finally, as a means of conducting this research, phenomenology challenged me to put aside my own biases so that I could be present and understand the experiences of my study participants (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

There are two main approaches to phenomenology: hermeneutic and transcendental. In hermeneutical phenomenology, the researcher not only describes the phenomenon but also interprets it. In contrast, the main focus of Transcendental Phenomenology consists of describing the participants' experiences as opposed to interpreting them (Creswell, 2007). Given these basic differences, I will utilize Transcendental Phenomenology, as developed by Moustakas (1994), as I seek to understand and describe the experiences of the parents, not to ascribe an interpretation to them.

### Interviews

This qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted through six semi-structured interviews with seven Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing their PhDs. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to approximately one hour. The interview format was the most appropriate for this study, enabling me to capture the individual narratives of the participants' experiences as parents to these high-achieving students. My interview protocol (Appendix A) included: (a) demographic questions; (b) questions based on my research questions; (c) questions based on my theoretical framework (Parent Development Theory); and finally, (d) questions that I, the researcher, was interested in finding out about this population.

Utilizing an interview protocol guided and focused the interviews. However, the semi-structured interview format allowed me to customize questions according to the participant or situation; it enabled me to relate with my participants in ways that

respected their feelings. This format permitted ideas and themes to rise to the surface based on the participants' reflections and narratives that might not have been part of the original protocol questions.

I conducted each interview in the parent's preferred language, whether that was Spanish or English. Although some parents were comfortable communicating in both languages, there were parents who did not feel comfortable speaking English. Spanish is my native language, but I speak English in my every day and academic life. Having to conduct interviews in Spanish created some anxiety for me, as I realized that once I was off-script, I would not be able to communicate as quickly or flawlessly as I did in English; however, I accepted this as part of my own learning process, having to struggle with language as so many immigrants and non-native English speakers do every day. I conducted five interviews in Spanish and one in English.

### Research Questions and Interview Protocol

The three questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How do Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing their PhD recall their personal experience as their children navigated their academic journey?
2. What impact do parents perceive that their child's educational journey had on themselves or other members of their family?
3. How do Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing a PhD describe their parenting role?

Research Question 1 was developed to capture the essence of the phenomenon based on the textural and structural description of the participants' experiences, as required by the phenomenological research methodology (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Research Question 2 was framed in order to understand how parents perceived the broader impacts of their children's educational journeys. The impetus for this question arose from professional and personal interest, as a goal of the McNair program at my institution is that the scholars' educational journey impacts not only the students, but also their families and communities. Finally, Research Question 3 was based on concepts associated with Parent Development Theory (PDT): bonding, discipline, education, welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity. Table 2 shows the relationship between the research questions, the interview questions, and the question rationale and/or theoretical framework.



Table 2

*Research Questions and Interview Items*

Research Questions	Interview Items	Rationale/Theoretical Framework
1. How do Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing their PhD recall their personal experience as their children navigated their academic journey?	15 – 27	Capture textual/structural description of experiences
2. What impact do parents perceive that their child’s educational journey had on themselves or other members of their family	28, 29	Professional Interest/ Broader Impacts
3. How do Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing a PhD describe their parenting role?	1 – 14	PDT Characteristics: Bonding, discipline, education, welfare and protection, responsivity, sensitivity

Participant Selection and Recruitment

Seven parents participated in the study. All study participants’ children were either enrolled in a doctoral program, or were enrolled in a master’s program and had already received acceptance into a doctoral program. The rationale for wanting to hear the experiences of parents whose children were at different stages in their pursuit of the PhD was to capture a diversity of narratives from parents who were experiencing their children’s educational journeys at different stages. In addition, it provided me with a wider population for recruitment.

Purposive sampling was utilized to identify participants. I currently work with McNair scholars at a large research university, and given the success of the program and the fact that we have built a level of trust with the students and their families, I believed that choosing parents of participants would facilitate the participant identification process. In addition, choosing parents of students who participated in the same program at the same institution provides a level of uniformity to the study.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program is part of the federal TRIO programs created out of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This particular program aims to increase PhD attainment among those underrepresented in graduate education (United States Department of Education, n.d). In order to qualify for the McNair Scholars Program, students must meet one of two criteria. They must either be part of (a) groups underrepresented in graduate education or (b) first generation and low-income. For the purposes of this grant, a first generation college student is one whose parents or guardians have not completed a bachelor's degree. Low-income denotes individuals whose family taxable income does not exceed 150% of the poverty level (USDOE, 2011).

For this study, alumni who had participated in the program (established in 2003) at my institution, identified as Latino/a, met the first generation and low-income criteria, and who were enrolled in a graduate program with the intention of attaining a PhD were identified. I contacted each of the scholars who fit the criteria by e-mail and asked them to reach out to a parent and let me know if that parent would be willing to participate in my study (Appendix B). Alumni were asked to identify which parent to reach out to with

the following prompt: “Which parent do you think would feel most comfortable sharing their journey as a parent to you as well as their experience as you went to college/graduate school; or who would you prefer to speak to me?” Within a week and a half of my request, I heard from six alumni whose parents were willing to participate. Alumni provided me with their parents’ contact information. Given the various methods of communication preferred by parents, I reached out to one parent through Facebook, two parents through e-mail, two parents through text messages, and one parent through his daughter, who believed this would be the easiest way to arrange the interaction (this parent did not have an e-mail address, Facebook, and did not use text messaging). Four of the six parents were sent an e-mail (in English or Spanish, as preferred by the parent) with a formal request to participate in the study, which included the informed consent form (Appendix C). One parent was only sent the informed consent form (without a formal invitation) through e-mail, given that our interview was quickly set up within a few hours and she agreed to participate through text message conversations. One parent did not have an e-mail address, and I had to send the formal request and consent to his daughter who read the information to him. The seventh participant was a father who joined the study when he began to provide answers to questions as I was interviewing his wife. I gathered his information after the interview was completed and informed him about consent.

### Site of Research

As explained by Creswell (2009), in phenomenological research participants may or may not be located in the same site. Within this research approach, the crucial aspect is that all the participants experience a similar phenomenon and could articulate that experience (Creswell, 2009). In this case, the phenomenon consisted of being the Latino/a parent of a first-generation college student pursuing a PhD.

During my initial contacts, I confirmed interview dates and times with the participating parents, and we decided the best location/method for the interview. I wanted participants to feel comfortable, and though my first reaction was that they would feel most comfortable in their homes (and least comfortable via Skype), after talking to some of the scholars with whom I work, I discovered that some parents do not feel comfortable having visitors in their homes for various reasons. On the other hand, some of the students regularly communicate with their parents via Skype, text message, and other on-line based communication methods. This knowledge made me realize that I was already making assumptions about the comfort level of participants based on my own biases. From that point on, I decided to listen to the participants so that they could dictate their most comfortable method of communication. Based on parent preference, I conducted three interviews in person, one interview through Skype, and two by phone.

### Data Collection Plan and Analysis

I began to recruit participants once Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix D) was received. As described in the Participant Selection and Recruitment section, I sent an e-mail to McNair alumni who fit the outlined criteria (first-generation/

low-income, pursuing PhD) and encouraged them to inquire whether a parent wanted to participate in this study. Once all six participants were identified, they received information on the study and informed consent, and their commitment to the study was ascertained. Finally, a date, time, and preferred interview method was established. A seventh participant joined the study as he began to answer questions when I was conducting one of the interviews.

I utilized Moustakas' (1994) Transcendental Phenomenology approach, which dictated that I set aside my own judgments and experiences as I sought to understand the experiences of my study participants. Thus, per Moustakas method, I attempted to see this phenomenon for the first time. Given my identity as a Latina first-generation college student pursuing a doctoral degree, it was of utmost importance that I set aside my own experience as much as possible in order to truly hear and understand my participants.

Moustakas (1994) provided a systematic procedure for conducting phenomenological studies. First, researchers must reflect and describe their own experiences in regards to the phenomenon at hand, allowing them to both acknowledge these experiences and set them aside, in essence, bracketing them out of their worldview. In this way, the researcher can be open to hearing the views expressed by the participants in an unbiased manner; this procedure is termed *epoche*. Next, data gathered from interviews are collected from study participants. Questions that are focused on gaining textural and structural description of the participant experiences are asked. After data collection and transcription, the researcher uses what Moustakas calls *horizontalization*. Though at first, all the information communicated by participants is given equal value,

through horizontalization the researcher begins to highlight significant pieces of the data that provide insight as to how the participants experienced the phenomenon at hand. The researcher moves on to create clusters of meaning by utilizing the highlighted data, and clustering it to develop categories of meaning or themes. A textural description is then developed based on the highlighted statements and themes that describe the participants' experience in relation to the phenomenon. Next, the researcher develops a structural description, which elaborates on the context that influenced the way in which participants experienced the phenomenon at hand. Finally, a composite description, which focuses on the common experiences of all participants, is created to represent the phenomenon's essence.

### Validation Strategies

Creswell (2007) highlighted strategies for validating qualitative research that increase the authenticity and credibility of qualitative studies. These include: prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, refining working hypothesis, clarifying research bias, member checking, rich/thick description, and external audits (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) recommended engaging in at least two of these strategies within a study. I employed four of these strategies in this study: triangulation, clarifying bias, member checking, and external audit. Table 3 summarizes the strategies highlighted by Creswell (2007) that were utilized.

Table 3

*Validation Strategies*

Validation Strategies	Description	Relationship to Study
Triangulation	Utilization of multiple sources, methods and theories to ensure evidence is accurate	Seven participants who experienced the same phenomenon were interviewed; thus, acquiring information on the common phenomenon through various sources.
Clarifying Bias	Researcher elucidates bias so reader can understand the researcher's position, biases, and assumptions, which may affect the study.	Positionality of researcher was stated prior to beginning study – as part of study proposal (see Chapter 1).
Member Checking	Researcher seeks participants' views on the findings and interpretations so they can assess accuracy and credibility	Parents who participate in the study were provided with the transcripts of their interview to ensure that what was stated was accurate
External Audit	External auditor examines the process and product of account	Dissertation chair served as external auditor and assessed whether the findings were supported by the collected data

*Note:* Adapted from *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, by J. W. Creswell, 2007, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

As proposed by Creswell (2007), the reliability of this study was addressed by keeping field notes (Appendix E). In this case, because interviews comprised the main method of recording data, I utilized two recording devices in order to yield a quality, detailed transcription based on those recordings. In addition, I took notes on notable observations, non-verbal cues, and other noteworthy participant reactions. Because I conducted the interviews, coded, and analyzed the data, this study did not use multiple

coders or other reliability processes that would require more than one researcher to analyze the data.

### IRB Approval and Ethical Considerations

After committee approval of my dissertation proposal, I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Central Florida to interview the study participants. This approval was necessary for this study, given that I sought to work directly with human subjects. IRB was approved as exempt human subject research (Appendix D). Per university requirement, I also completed CITI Training, which provides training for ethical research standards dealing with human subjects. Given ethical and research guidelines, I obtained study participants' informed consent.

### Confidentiality

The participants' identities were kept anonymous in order to protect their privacy. Aliases were used to identify the study participants. Data and recorded interviews were carefully protected and stored to maintain confidentiality.

At first I considered not identifying the participants' specific countries of heritage in order to further protect their identities, but I soon realized the need to include this information. Although Latinos/as may be perceived as a monolithic community, the reality is that each Latin American country is unique and provides an important source of identity, community, and pride to those who have roots in those countries. As I conducted the interviews, the participants' accents revealed their countries of heritage, as



did their reminiscence of their homeland and the foods they made for their children. I simply could not separate the countries from the participants and their stories. For many Latinos/as who may read this dissertation, a participant being from Colombia, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic or Honduras matters – there is familiarity of speech, history and experience.

As I reflected on confidentiality concerns, it became clear to me that only their children were likely to identify the participants, since they encouraged their parents to participate in this study. However, they could easily identify their parent whether or not I included the country of origin by utilizing other identifying data, such as sex, profession, language proficiency, location of interview, etc. Though I cannot ensure that each participant's child will not be able to identify his or her respective parent, I took great care with the most delicate theme within this dissertation, Theme 3: *Amor Compasivo* - Distance, Pain, and Sacrifice. Data in this theme includes information that parents might not have shared with their children; thus, I ensured that it was completely unidentifiable by quoting all statements only in English and not connecting them to specific participants.

#### Originality Score

The University of Central Florida sets stringent originality and plagiarism policies. This document was submitted to iThenticate and met the standard of having an originality score that did not exceed the threshold set by my dissertation chair. Results were presented to my committee the day of my defense.

### Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology undertaken for this qualitative, phenomenological research study. In it, I examined the research design and rationale, research questions and interview protocol, participant selection and recruitment, site of research, data collection plan and analysis, IRB Approval and ethical considerations, and originality.

## CHAPTER 4 PORTRAITS OF THE PARENTS

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to figuratively draw a picture of the parents who participated in this study based on demographic data and my perceptions as the interviewer. It is important to note, however, that it is impossible to accurately communicate in writing the emotions that were transmitted, intentionally or not, as the participants discussed parenting their children. These non-verbals, which permeated each interview, (whether through facial expression, sounds, or tone of voice) cannot be transferred onto the page.

During the interviews, it was difficult to bracket my own experience. Parents spoke with deep emotion, and due to my own connections to the research topic and the students themselves, I wanted to reassure them. Though challenging, I was able to maintain my composure and let them share their experiences without interjecting myself. I felt humbled and grateful for the opportunity to hear each parent's experience. At the culmination of one of the interviews, a parent commented, "This has been one of the great satisfactions that my daughter has given me. When she asked me if I could participate, I said yes immediately because this is a gift. Few parents will have this opportunity that I have, to be taken into account..." This gracious comment reassured me of the importance of giving these parents a voice. Though I have done my best to concisely and accurately portray my impressions of the parents I interviewed, I am very

aware that any picture I have drawn was biased by my own experience and falls flat to the reality of their dimensionality.

It is also important to note that all of the parents agreed to participate in my study within two and a half weeks of my initial request for participants. All of the participants' children were alumni of the McNair Scholars Program at the institution where I work. I had the privilege to work with some of these young women in their undergraduate career, and some of them were involved with the program before I became a staff member. I strongly believe that the reason why both the alumni and the parents were so willing to help me with this study was because of the level of support these alumni received while in the program. This connection, I believe, created trust, leading participants to feel comfortable not only meeting with me but also honestly sharing their experiences.

#### Participant Profiles

In total, seven individuals participated in this study; their demographic profiles are presented in Table 4. Five of the participants interviewed were mothers and two were fathers. All of the participants had daughters currently attending graduate school, aiming to complete PhDs. The participants identified as Latino/a, with four born outside of the United States, two in Puerto Rico, and two in the mainland United States. Although none had completed a bachelor's degree, six of the seven participants had completed some technical training or associate's degree. The participants' ages ranged from 48-80 years old; five were married, and two divorced. Three of the participants expressed their desire to be interviewed in Spanish, the language in which they were most comfortable

Table 4

*Participant Demographic Information*

Participant	Age	Place of Birth/ Heritage	Language Proficiency	Highest Degree	Marital Status	Current Profession	Child - Stage in Graduate School
Ana	50	Colombia	Spanish	Two-year Technical Degree (accounting) after high school	Married	Housekeeping	Completing Master's Degree – Enrolled in PhD
Blanca	68	Colombia	Spanish	Course in Accounting after high school/ Cosmetology degree	Divorced	Retired (Previous – facilities staff)	Dissertation stage
Celeste	49	Puerto Rico	English/ Spanish	Two years of business administration after high school	Married (to David)	Customer Service	Completing 1 <sup>st</sup> Year of PhD
David	51	U.S.A (New York) /Cuban Heritage	English/ Spanish	High school	Married (to Celeste)	Customer Service	Completing 1 <sup>st</sup> Year of PhD
Elsa	57	U.S.A. (New York)/ Puerto Rican Heritage	English/ Spanish	Technical education after high school	Divorced	Dialysis Technician	Dissertation stage
Federico	80	Honduras	Spanish	Technical school (maintenance) after GED	Married	Retired (Previous – maintenance)	Completing 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year of PhD
Gabriela	48	Dominican Republic	English/ Spanish	Associate's degree	Married	Self-employed	Dissertation stage

conversing; four were bilingual and comfortable being interviewed in either language. I only conducted one interview in English; the rest were conducted in Spanish.

Though seven parents participated, there were only six interviews. One of the interviews began with a mother exclusively answering questions, but halfway through the interview the father began to answer questions as well. Thus, the responses of this mother and father were analyzed as one interview for the purposes of data analysis.

As previously mentioned, both mothers and fathers participated in this study; however, this was not the original study's design. Based on the literature's overall consensus that mothers are often the main emotional supporters of Latino/a graduate school students (Gándara, 1994; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006), I originally intended to only interview mothers. However, my dissertation committee felt strongly that I should not intentionally leave fathers out of the study. It was decided during my proposal defense that I would ask each graduate student which parent he or she would prefer I interview. My committee noted that if all the graduate students decided that I should interview a mother, that answer in itself would support the literature. Five of the six graduate students pointed me to their mothers, one to a father. Though not unanimous, five of the six graduate students preferring for me to speak with their mother seems to support the literature in its assertion of the primary role of mothers; nevertheless, given various factors, I believe that the reality in this case may be more nuanced. Three of the students who pointed me to their mothers expressed that if I wanted to, they would gladly facilitate my interview with their father. One student shared with me that though she thought her mom would be most comfortable being interviewed, her father was often the

person she went to in times of crisis. During another interview, one of the mothers alluded to the fact that her daughter would often want to speak to the dad alone when she was having a difficult time. Two of the participants who directed me to their mothers came from single parent households where the mother was the main caregiver. Thus, given that I did not delve further into why a specific parent was chosen, I could not make assumptions about motives.

A significant but unanticipated similarity among the participants was that all of their children pursuing doctoral degrees were women. Once I began to collect information on Latino/a first-generation graduate students who had participated in my institution's McNair Scholars Program, it became clear that women overwhelmingly outnumbered men in this category. In the end, I only heard back from female alumni of the program whose parents qualified for this study.

#### Señora Ana

“...I haven't had to make an academic effort, but the other type of effort, the one of faith, of saying that she can do it, of support, of pushing her”/“...*que no me ha tocado esfuerzo académico, sino el otro esfuerzo, el de la fé, de decir que va a poder, el apoyo, el empuje*” (Interview 1, lines 47-48).

Señora Ana was the first parent to agree to become a participant in my study. Her daughter, a previous student of mine who was about to complete her Master's degree and begin her doctorate, provided me with her mother's e-mail address and encouraged me to contact her through Facebook. I did. She quickly responded and immediately agreed to

participate in my study. I had the sense that the main reason that she was eager to participate was to help me, because I had helped her daughter in her collegiate journey. Señora Ana's kind and caring personality was palpable even through written messages. When I asked her when she could meet, she suggested that same weekend – she wanted to make sure I got started as soon as possible with my study. Furthermore, knowing that I was Colombian, she invited me to a Colombian lunch “*un almuerzo colombiano*”. Honored by her invitation, I immediately accepted.

After a 40-minute drive to Señora Ana's house, her husband and teenage daughter warmly welcomed me. The house was very nicely decorated and organized. I immediately felt at ease – for a second transported by the sights, smells, and accents to my home country. A couple of minutes later, Señora Ana stepped into the dining room apologizing for being late. She explained that she had been rushing to get ready to meet me. Señora Ana was lovely, with expressive eyes, an easy smile, light tan complexion and long dark brown wavy hair; thin and petite, she wore a long dress with pastel colors. Though she had a bright smile, I sensed her melancholy. She explained that there had been a death in her family back in Colombia, and that things had become complicated for her that morning. She told me that her husband and youngest daughter had made lunch so that she could concentrate on supporting her family. I felt both saddened by the news, and humbled by her willingness to talk with me in those difficult circumstances. We moved to the family room, she closed the door, and we began the interview. My impression that she carried a heavy burden for those she loved was soon confirmed. She expressed both pride and joy in her daughter's accomplishments as well as an



unwavering determination to be strong for her daughter and motivate her along the way. Her love for her daughter brought her happiness but also deep worry, feeling a need to protect her from harm while at the same time knowing that she needed to continue to let her fly.

#### Señora Blanca

“I told her one day, ‘I think that I am going to end up graduating with you, with an honorary degree’”/“...*Yo le dije un día, ‘yo creo que yo voy a terminar graduada con usted, con un grado honorífico’*” (Interview 2, lines 67-68).

My second interview was with Señora Blanca, the mother of a McNair alumna about to enter her fourth year in her doctoral program. Though I had only briefly met her daughter in passing when she came to visit my institution, she was very close to my supervisor who has been a mentor to her throughout her academic journey. Soon after reaching out to the daughter, she sent me her mother’s contact information and informed me that her mother was happy to talk to me. I soon e-mailed Señora Blanca, and she replied within a couple of days, agreeing to participate in my study. We arranged for the interview to take place on the following Monday evening when it was most convenient for her schedule. Although she resided in the same city as I do, she was in Colombia at the time. We agreed to conduct the interview through Skype. Because the interview was arranged for the late evening, I tried to connect with Señora Blanca from my home. After failing to find her contact through Skype, I called her using my cell phone and she informed me she could not decipher how to set up Skype. I attempted to help her

navigate it, but ultimately we decided it was best to conduct the interview through the phone. I put my cell phone on speaker and placed the recorder right next to it, hoping that it would clearly capture the conversation.

Señora Blanca's voice was low and firm. Her accent was very distinctive and familiar to me, coming from the same city in Colombia where my mother grew up. This unique, melodic accent gave light and color to our conversation. She was warm, personable, and exuded confidence. More than anything, her closeness to her daughter was clear. More than anyone else I interviewed, she seemed to know the ins and outs of her daughter's experience in higher education, both social and academic. It almost seemed that she lived her daughter's academic journey along with her, as closely as any parent could. She seemed eager to share with me her daughter's brilliance, but also the difficulties they both, mother and daughter, continuously experienced throughout that journey.

#### Señora Celeste and Señor David

“...we are the three musketeers”/“...*nosotros somos los tres mosqueteros*”

(Interview 3, lines 212-213)

I had only expected to speak to one parent during this interview, but I talked with both, which only provided richness and added a deeper context to the conversation. I secured this interview by contacting one of my previous students who had recently completed her first year of doctoral study. She soon told me that both her parents were willing to participate, but if I needed just one person, her mom would like to be

interviewed. I quickly set up the interview with Señora Celeste, which, like my previous interview, took place in the evening. I was able to easily connect with her through Skype, but could not hear her very well due to a bad connection. When I began to talk to her, I sensed some apprehension in her part, as if she was not completely comfortable talking with me. The bad Internet connection did not help the situation. We attempted to reconnect through Skype to see if the connection would improve but it did not. I proceeded to call her on my cell phone and recorded the interview that way.

In the brief time that I saw Señora Celeste through Skype, I noticed how young and pretty she was; she had light brown skin, dark hair, and a delicate face. She informed me that she was originally from Puerto Rico. I also heard an excited voice in the background; I assumed it was her husband – my first introduction to Señor David. Once we began talking on the phone, I perceived that Señora Celeste was more at ease. She opened up and began to share her parenting journey with me. Communication and respect were at the core of many of her answers. As I was asking her the last question geared towards the theoretical framework, I heard Señor David's voice in the background; he was answering the question, but I could not hear him. He took the phone and began to provide his perspective. Seeing how eager he was to also share his journey, I invited him to join the interview. Señor David has Cuban roots but was raised in New York. Though his Spanish was good, I could tell by the way he answered questions and sometimes said words in English first that he was most comfortable speaking English. Señora Celeste and Señor David proceeded to answer the rest of the questions – sometimes one would answer, sometimes both. From their answers and their support of

each other's comments, it became evident that their experiences were congruent. They reinforced each other's answers, sometimes even stating the same point in different words. They also made affirming sounds that confirmed that each was in agreement with the other's statement. In fact, as they recalled specific instances, they laughed and reminisced. I decided to count them as a team when assessing interview themes and research questions, considering the unique situation they presented and because there were questions Señora Celeste solely answered.

Señora Elsa

"...She always calls me, 'you are my best friend' but to me, it's also, she's my best friend and my daughter you know...having them move away it's hard, it's hard"

(Interview 4, lines 232-233)

Of all the interviews, I was the most surprised to secure the one with Señora Elsa. I did not hear back for a couple of weeks after I sent the e-mail to her daughter asking if she would connect me to a parent. This alumna graduated from the institution in which I worked before I joined the McNair Scholars Program. At the time of my request, she was in the dissertation stage of her doctoral program. When I did hear back from her, she apologized for the late reply and provided me with her mom's cell phone. Unlike the other participants whose daughters had told me that their parent had agreed to the interview, I was not sure how this mother would feel about participating in my study. To my surprise, as soon as I text messaged her, she told me she was aware of my request and could talk immediately. I was out of the office, so we scheduled the interview for that

afternoon when I returned to my office. After some technical difficulties related to Skype, we began our interview only a few hours after our first contact. My interview with Señora Elsa was the only one I conducted in English. Raised on the mainland, of Puerto Rican heritage, she spoke both languages. We began to text message in English and because of that, our interview naturally took place in English. At that point, I was so familiar with conducting the interviews in Spanish that interviewing in English felt odd – somewhat less natural.

My first impression of Señora Elsa was that she was very elegant. She had her black hair in a sleek, low bun. Her makeup was impeccable, wearing a dark shade of lipstick and beautiful eye shadow with greyish tones, which contrasted well with her light complexion. She wore a black top. What I liked most about talking with Señora Elsa was that she was very matter of fact, very transparent. Her answers were brief and concrete. Though bold and honest, I quickly noticed that she was not as confident in other ways I had experienced with my previous participants. Before we began the interview, she shared with me that she did not think there was much she could say, but that she was willing to talk to me to help with my study. Her answers repeatedly gave all credit to her daughter for her own success, her pride apparent, but almost disregarding her own impact on her daughter's journey. At the completion of our interview, when asked if she had something to add, she said, "No, pretty much I think that would be it...there's nothing else to share...like I said, I don't say much, I don't do much...but that's about it...I'm a very proud mother, and glad that she, she's gone this far" (Interview 5, lines

315-317). However, based on her interview, not only were her love and respect for her daughter clear, but so was her unconditional support for her.

#### Señor Federico

“Every day a hug, ‘I love you, I want you to study, I want you to get ahead’ almost every day it was the same song”/“*Todos los días un abrazo, ‘la quiero, quiero que usted estudie, quiero que usted salga adelante’ todos los días casi era el mismo canto”*

(Interview 5, lines 32-33).

The father of one of our most active and engaged previous McNair Scholar who had just completed her first year in a doctoral program, I met Señor Federico a year earlier around the time of his daughter’s graduation. I remember thinking then that the affection he felt towards his daughter permeated his pores. It was almost a visible love. Though the student mentioned that both of her parents would be happy to provide the interview, her preference was that I interview her father, with whom she spoke most often and in most depth. Given that Señor Federico did not have an e-mail address and was not comfortable with technology, I communicated through his daughter to arrange the interview, having her read to him the informed consent to ensure that he was comfortable with the interview. His daughter assured me that he was excited about it and was looking forward to it. Señor Federico did not know how to use Skype or send text messages, and from our conversations it became evident that meeting in person was most suitable. He offered to come to the city where I reside for the interview, but given that he lived almost

four hours away I did not feel comfortable with that arrangement, and I drove to meet with him.

Señor Federico and I arranged to meet at my hotel lobby, which was less than 10 minutes away from his home. As I was seeking the best place to conduct the interview 15 minutes before our scheduled time, I noticed that Señor Federico was already waiting outside, wearing a white polo shirt and black pants. I met him, and we soon found a place to conduct the interview. I reviewed the informed consent with him once again, as I had with the rest of the participants. I took special care to go over everything very carefully since I had not been able to send the form directly to him.

At 80-years-old, he was quite a bit older than the other parents I had interviewed, but his young spirit shone through his easy manner and affable laugh. He was thin and tall (at least in relation to me), balding, with grey hair, large brown eyes, a broad nose, and light brown complexion. He seemed calm and peaceful, and had a soft voice, which along with his perfect Spanish and Honduran accent gave me the impression that he was a very measured and thoughtful person. It was clear to me throughout the interview that his life revolved around his daughter in unique ways. His daughter filled him with pride, purpose, and love. Yet, Señor Federico believed that his role was to do everything in his power, materially or emotionally, to ease her journey so she could accomplish her purpose. He expected that the journey would continue to take his daughter physically away from him, but he knew that in their conversations and interactions they would always be close.

## Señora Gabriela

“...Always thinking about her... showing her that I was always there for her. That my days have 24 hours in which she was always present”/“...*Estando pendiente de ella...mostrándole que estaba allí para ella siempre. Que mis días tenían 24 horas en los cuales ella estaba presente*” (Interview 6, lines 36-37)

Señora Gabriela was my last interview and the one in which I smiled and laughed the most. Although her daughter had graduated before I began working in the McNair office, I had the fortune of interacting with her numerous times as she had recently moved back into the area to work on her dissertation. The alumna quickly connected me to her mother, and we were easily able to arrange the interview. Señora Gabriela chose to be interviewed at my office, as her preferred time to meet was during the day.

As soon as Señora Gabriela walked into my office I was taken aback by how young and pretty she looked. I told her so, and she laughed. Of Dominican heritage, she had a tan complexion, her light brown hair was in a neat ponytail, and she had big expressive brown eyes and a beautiful bright smile. Señora Gabriela and I began our conversation in English, and she mentioned that I could conduct the interview in either language, that she was equally comfortable with both. I decided to conduct the interview in Spanish, sensing there was something about the language that felt more personal and comfortable. At the beginning of the interview, when I asked her how she would describe being a parent to her daughter, her eyes filled with tears, full with emotion just thinking about it. Though she often mentioned worrying about her daughter, wanting her to be near, and her desire to protect her from all things, she appeared joyful and at ease, at



least through the interview. ‘Mama Hen’, she repeatedly called herself, knowing that she was overprotective and also knowing that she had to control that urge. She noted that her daughter had placed boundaries on her to ameliorate her overprotective tendencies, but even with boundaries in place, she could not help but constantly worry, all while offering her daughter her love and unconditional support.

### Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the participant profiles and my own impressions of each participant as I conducted the interviews. It was a nearly impossible task to encapsulate the essence of the study participants. The feelings they communicated through words and emotion (i.e., affection, worry, pain, longing, hope, pride) all speak to the boundless love that these parents had for their children. Behind each still portrait presented in this chapter through words, there are vivid colors and textures of these parents’ deep love and sacrifice. These voices are further explored in the following chapters, adding depth to their experience.

## CHAPTER 5 THEMES: ENTRE VOCES Y PALABRAS

### Introduction

The analysis in this chapter was influenced by the Transcendental Phenomenology approach, as proposed by Moustakas (1994). The approach delineates specific steps intended to reduce and analyze the data gathered from participant interviews. Throughout the chapter, I describe the steps I took to arrive at various themes and delve into the identified themes. My process of analysis is illustrated from the conclusion of interviews up to the point at which all themes were identified.

### Transcription Process

Overwhelmed by the prospect of transcribing my interviews, I originally intended to have a professional transcriptionist complete the transcriptions. To ensure this, I hired a bilingual transcriptionist a month before I conducted interviews. Unfortunately, the transcriptionist encountered health issues that compromised her ability to meet the agreed deadline. Prior to this notification, personal anxiety over extended timelines prompted me to begin transcribing interviews I had already conducted. After having transcribed so many of them, I felt confident enough to complete the task. While tedious, the process of transcribing interviews proved very beneficial to my own understanding of the data.

As a novice transcriber, it took me about three hours to transcribe each half hour of interview data. I intently listened to each word and sentence, having to go back numerous times in order to accurately capture each word, pause, and laugh. This process

made me intimately familiar with each interview. By the time all the transcriptions were completed, I could easily recall the voices, answers, and even the feel of each interview. The transcription process helped me absorb the data in a way that simply reading the already transcribed documents could not. Beyond enhancing my familiarity with the data, the transcription process helped me bracket my personal views (Moustakas, 1994), as I had to intently focus on the participants' voices and hear what they were saying without judgment. This was something that I had found much more difficult to do as I was conducting the interviews.

### Data Reduction

Once the transcriptions were completed, I read each one of the interviews twice to ensure I absorbed all of the information holistically. I was receptive to each statement, giving all of them equal value. I then began to undertake the first step to reduce data based on Moustakas' (1994) Transcendental Phenomenology approach, horizontalization. As I read the interviews once again, I underlined what I perceived to be significant statements. Statements were selected as significant if they provided context to the phenomenon at hand (Creswell, 1998). A sample of the horizontalization process is contained in Appendix F. After I completed underlining significant statements in each interview, I re-read the significant statements and put key words next to each statement to help me begin the process of identifying themes.

Seeking to cluster the significant statements into themes (Moustakas, 1994), I devised a way that would efficiently allow me organize and separate the data. Based on

the underlined text, I transferred all significant statements from my transcribed documents into a blank word document, effectively placing all of the statements selected through the process of horizontalization in one document. As described by Moustakas' (1994), in order to reduce the data, I deleted any overlapping, repetitive, or incomplete statements. Based on the keywords I had written next to the statements, I developed general themes, which I used to begin organizing statements into cohesive themes (Appendix G). I then created a table that allowed me organize the themes and tally which participants had statements within each theme (Appendix H). In total, 12 themes were identified. I then began to collapse related themes. Once I collapsed the themes, a total of seven themes remained (Table 5).

As shown in Table 5, five themes were mentioned by all of the participants. These became the major themes: (1) *Del Apoyo Al Empuje* - Support, Motivation, and Push; (2) *Siempre Juntos* - High Levels of Interaction; (3) *Amor Compasivo* - Distance, Pain, and Sacrifice; (4) *Que Se Sienta Satisfecha* - Wishes for Meaningful Career; and (5) *Por Primera Vez* - Parents Experiencing College and Children as Teachers.

I later added a sixth theme that was also supported by statements from all the participants: *Pero la Apoyo* - Uncertainty and Support for the PhD. The statements ultimately highlighted in this theme were originally intended to be included in *Del Apoyo al Empuje*: Support, Motivation, and Push; however, once included, these statements did not entirely fit with the original theme, prompting me to develop a sixth major theme.

Three participants mentioned two themes which became minor themes. Minor themes included: (1) *Sufrimiento Económico* – Financial Concerns and (2) *Que Dios La*

*Cuide*: God/Faith. Once I selected all of the themes, I reorganized them in an order that would best reflect the narrative. Table 6 shows the major and minor themes in order of their presentation.

Table 5

*Themes Mentioned by Participants*

Themes	Ana	Blanca	Celeste/ David	Elsa	Federico	Gabriela
Support, Motivation, Push	X	X	X	X	X	X
High levels of Interaction	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wishes for Fulfilling Career	X	X	X	X	X	X
Distance: Pain and Sacrifice	X	X	X	X	X	X
Experiencing College/Children and teachers	X	X	X	X	X	X
Financial Concerns	X		X	X		
God/Faith	X	X			X	

Table 6

*Major and Minor Themes*

Themes
Major Themes
Theme 1: <i>Pero la Apoyo</i> – Uncertainty and Support for the PhD
Theme 2: <i>Del Apoyo al Empuje</i> – Support, Motivation, and Push
Theme 3: <i>Siempre Juntos</i> – High Levels of Interaction
Theme 4: <i>Por Primera Vez</i> – Experiencing College and Children as Teachers
Theme 5: <i>Amor Compasivo</i> – Distance, Pain, and Sacrifice
Theme 6: <i>Que Se Sienta Satisfecha</i> - Wishes for a Fulfilling Career
Minor Themes
Theme 1: <i>Sufrimiento Económico</i> – Economic Concerns
Theme 2: <i>Que Dios La Cuide</i> – God/Faith

## Major Themes

This section delves into the identified themes shown in Table 6. Per Moustakas (1994), I examined each theme through a textural and structural lens. The textural description was used to examine what the participants experienced, and the structural description was used to examine the context of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

I considered language and meaning extensively as I was crafting this section; thus, it is important to explain my choices as I introduce these themes. The bilingual titles of the themes were developed to reflect the totality of the data incorporated in each theme. In addition, statements that were made in Spanish are quoted verbatim in Spanish and then translated in English to capture meaning. I strategically decided to include original Spanish quotations alongside their English translations, understanding that flow and style would be potentially impacted. The Spanish language captures accents and feelings that the English language cannot equally capture.

### Theme 1: *Pero la Apoyo* - Uncertainty and Support for the PhD

#### Textural Description

When I asked the participants how they felt and what they thought when their children told them they were going to pursue a PhD, all of them told me they were supportive. However, it was the rest of the narrative that told a more complete story. There was a “but” or hesitation in the responses. There was pride, but also trepidation. There was support, but also uncertainty and worry.

Señora Ana shared that when her daughter told her she wanted to pursue a doctorate, she did not know what a PhD was or what it meant. Her daughter told her the doctoral degree would take five more years of schooling after she completed her undergraduate degree. Señora Ana clearly did not expect her daughter to go to school for that long, and the realization gave her pause. However, her desire to see her daughter achieve her dreams went beyond any concern she may have had. She explained:

...Yes, yes, I really didn't know what the doctorate was...I expected a masters and that's it. Do you understand? So, when she started talking about the doctorate she told me "It's going to be another five years." And I said "five more years!?"

... I thought that she would do a bachelors and a masters and that's it...But I never told her no...she was so excited...And I told her "You are in the country of opportunities, they call it the country of opportunities but you have to look for them, they are not going to come to your door. If you want to do it, do it, take on the world, fly. I will never tell you no." That's what I told her that day.

*...Si si, yo realmente no sabía del doctorado...yo pensaba que masters y ya. ¿Si me entiende? Entonces cuando ella empezó que el doctorado, me dijo "es que son cinco años más". Y yo "¿Cinco años más?!"...y yo esperaba que ella hiciera el bachelor y el masters y ya. ... Pero nunca le dije que no... Ella bien ilusionada. ... Y yo le dije a ella "Tú estás acá en este país de las oportunidades, este le llaman el país de las oportunidades, pero hay que buscarlas, no es que le llegarán a uno a la puerta. Si tú lo quieres hacer háglo, comete el mundo, vuela. Por mí,*

*nunca te voy decir que no." Yo le dije ese día eso a ella. (Interview 1, lines 366-376)*

Like Señora Ana, Señora Gabriela also talked about her concern for the length of time necessary to complete a doctorate. Her response had an air of powerless resignation, but she expressed respect for her daughter's choices and unconditional support.

Wow, when are you going to finish? (Laughs). I thought that. I mean – Wow, when are you going to finish!? But yes, I wanted to support her the same as I supported her at the beginning and, and respect her decision, because you have to respect them. What I...what I say can have an influence, but she already has...she is an adult. So the best thing I can do is to support her. Eh, tell her, okay, how can I help you? We are here and let's keep moving forward.

*Wow ¿cuando va a terminar? (risas). Lo pensé. Digo –wow ¿cuando va a terminar? Pero sí sí la la la quise apoyar igual que como la apoye al principio y, y de respetar su decisión, porque hay que respetarlas. Ya ...lo que yo pueda decir influencia, pero ya ella...es adulta. Entonces lo mejor lo que yo puedo hacer es apoyarla. Eh, decirle okay, en qué te puedo ayudar; sí, aquí estamos y pa'lante. (Interview 6, lines 189-193)*

Señora Blanca's concern was distance. She wanted her daughter to stay close, but soon found out it was not likely. She explained,

I felt happy, Natalia. I would even tell her, "(daughter) why don't you look for a doctorate here in (this city) so we can be together? I want to be by your side."

And she would tell me "No mom, I am going to go to the best university there is."



And she applied to 10 universities, and they accepted her in nine...and I was happy - I wanted to jump on one leg; but also with the pain of knowing she would leave the house and everything...but I said “God, I give it to you so she will succeed and can go where she wants to go.”

*Yo me sentí feliz Natalia. Yo hasta le decía pero (hija) por qué no buscas un doctorado por aquí en (esta ciudad) pa que estemos juntas, yo quiero estar al lado suyo. Y me decía, "No mamá, yo voy para la mejor universidad que hay" y aplicó a diez universidades y nueve la aprobaron....yo era feliz, yo era que brincaba en una pata; pero con el dolor que se me fuera pues de la casa y todo...pero dije yo “Diosito te lo ofrezco para que ella salga adelante y pueda llegar donde ella quiera llegar.” (Interview 6, lines 321-326)*

For Señor David, the concern was financial. He was proud of his daughter but worried about how she could make her dreams a reality.

The number one thing we lived in that moment was the biggest proudest moment that a parent can experience. But the second thing was my concern. How can we pay? Because there is no way that we could pay for her doctorate...so it was an enormous concern...

*Numero uno que vivimos en ese momento fue la cosa más grande orgulloso que un padre puede oír. Pero el segundo viene a siendo mi preocupación. ¿Cómo podemos pagar? porque no hay manera que le podamos pagar el doctorado a*

*ella...entonces...ese era una preocupación demasiado grande....* (Interview 3, lines 348-351)

Finally, Señora Elsa expressed her pride and immense happiness with her daughter's decision, but also worry for the workload that her daughter would have to take on. She was also extremely proud of her daughter's journey and happy with the decision. She explained,

I was ecstatic. I was ummm, worried for her because I know it's a lot of work. Not that she couldn't handle it, I knew she could. But when you're stressed sometimes it's a little hard to do the work. But I knew she could do it. I always knew she could do it and again, I...I was beside myself...I go, "My God, I can't believe she's going for the gusto"...not too many people make it that far. There was a lady in the job back then, many years, my daughter was about five or six, and she was so proud going to...going to her graduation for her PhD, and I go "Oh my God, I can't wait till my daughter, if she does decides to get her PhD..." and then when I saw myself in that...in her shoes, I go wow, that's like... a dream came true pretty much. So yeah, I'm beside myself really.... (Interview 4, lines 201-209)

### Structural Description

There are a few factors that can provide insight as to the context or influences that may have led these parents to experience apprehension at the idea of their children pursuing a PhD while at the same time offering them unwavering support. First, these

parents, who have not have completed bachelor's degrees, are unfamiliar with academia. This creates a vacuum of knowledge about the intricacies of the journey their children want to undertake. In effect, literature has found that first-generation college students who pursue doctoral degrees often face challenges explaining their academic journey to parents; furthermore, these studies posit that there is lack of family understanding about what the PhD journey entails (Gonzalez et al, 2001; Holly & Gardner, 2012; Leyva, 2011; Sowell, 2015). While parents have an understanding of careers in the fields of medicine, law, or business, and may have been exposed to individuals who practice those careers, it is unlikely that they would have significant exposure to individuals with a PhD or understand the areas of research or teaching at the college level. This may lead them to question the worthiness of the time, intellectual, and emotional investment their children are making – as they do not fully understand the benefits of attaining this degree.

Parents' ambivalence toward their children's career goals may also be influenced by the fear that this journey will create physical or emotional distance between themselves and their children. As discussed in the literature, Latino/a culture is collectivistic and familism is an important value (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). In this case, children are choosing a path that not only takes them away from family, but also places a new competing interest in a position of priority. Parents mentioned concern about the length of time a PhD would take, which could be related to a fear that their children are taken from them by their academic pursuits.

Another factor that may cause worry for these parents may be the emotional, financial, and physical toll that this endeavor could take on their children– and their own

inability to help their children overcome these challenges. Alternatively, parents may have anticipated that their children would soon start their ‘real’ lives after completing college or a two year masters, and this new path would delay that stage – leading them to internally question the decision based on their own expectations for their children.

While there were fears and hesitations, parents ultimately were supportive of their children’s decisions. All of the children in the study are high achieving, as evidenced by the fact that they are pursuing doctoral degrees. The parents’ support for their children’s decision is likely influenced by their awareness of their children’s academic ability and consistent dedication to their academic path. Similarly, their desire to see their children achieve their dreams is a strong driving force in their unwavering support – even when it may not have been their parents’ first choice of career for them. In addition, while parents may not fully understand what the PhD is or what it entails, the prestige of achieving that kind of recognition within any field gives rise to feelings of pride and a desire to encourage children in their journey.

## Theme 2: *Del Apoyo al Empuje* - Support, Motivation, and Push

### Textural Description

All of the participants of this study articulated supporting, motivating and encouraging their children through their educational journey. From verbally and emotionally supporting their children’s endeavors, to actively seeking ways to motivate

and drive their children to success, these parents were active participants as their children pursued their educational paths.

Highlighting the importance of parental support for their children, Señora Celeste posits that as a parent “The most essential thing is to support your children in everything they want to accomplish”/“*lo más esencial de todo es apoyar a sus hijos en todo lo que ellos quieren triunfar*” (Interview 3, 23-24).

Señora Gabriela explained that even when her daughter left home to pursue her academic career, she sought to provide her with unconditional support:

...supporting her. Supporting her in everything I could. Letting her know that I would be there for anything she needed. And that regardless of the distance, that there were ways in which she could be with me. And that I was there for her the same.

*... apoyándola. Apoyándola en todo lo que podía. Haciéndole saber que allí estaba para ella en lo que necesitara. Y que a pesar de la distancia había muchas formas en que ella podía contar conmigo. Y que yo estaba allí para ella igual.* (Interview 6, lines 73-75)

Beyond support, some of the participants expressed the desire to motivate and drive their children towards accomplishing their goals. Thus, their role was not just passive support, but active motivation and encouragement. For example, Señor Federico explained that the role of a parent was to “motivate our children so they can achieve things that we were not able to”/“*motivar a los hijos para que ellos hagan cosas mejores que nosotros no pudimos hacer*” (Interview 5, line 24).

Señor David motivated his daughter through cautionary tales, cautioning his child not to follow his footsteps. He used his own story to encourage his daughter not to waste her brilliance:

And sometimes I've told her what I've gone through, what I've lost. I don't want to give that to my future children, what I went through when I was young. With (my daughter) always the experiences that I've had, the good ones, the bad ones, I taught (her), and I told her, "God gave you such a brilliant mind that it would be...a shame to waste it."

*Y yo a veces le he dicho lo que yo he pasado, lo que he perdido. Yo no quiero darles eso a mis futuros hijos, lo que pasé cuando yo era joven. Con (mi hija) siempre las experiencias que he tenido, las buenas y las malas, se las enseñé (a mi hija), y le digo, "Dios te dio una mentalidad tan brillante que sería, algo... a shame to waste it." (Interview 3, lines 217-220)*

Señora Ana stated that '*empujar a los hijos*' pushing children to succeed was essential. In fact, Señora Ana embodied this philosophy of support, motivation, and push. She recalled reassuring her nervous daughter as she applied to colleges that "Things will work!"/"*Las cosas van a salir!*" (Interview 1, lines 288-289). And then, after her daughter was in college, because they did not have money for a car, Señora Ana drove her daughter to classes for a year and a half, which could take up to an hour each way. She remembers these experiences fondly; her contributions to her daughter's journey.

The importance of parental support, motivation, and empuje or push at the graduate level was illustrated by Señora Ana and Señora Blanca, who discussed verbally encouraging their daughters during very difficult periods of their graduate careers. Thus, these mothers became active participants in promoting the persistence of their daughters.

Señora Ana's daughter moved away to complete her Master's degree and soon after arriving was depressed and homesick. She told her mom that she did not know if she could do it. Señora Ana said, "So I gave the word to her, I told her 'You can do it, you are strong, God put you there'"/ "*Entonces yo le di palabra a ella, yo le dije 'Tú puedes, tú eres una berraca, Dios te puso allá'*" (Interview 1, Line 243-244).

She went on to share the motivation she provided her daughter:

You are going to continue because you are strong. You were not born to leave things unfinished, I will not tell you 'Sweetie, come back' because you are going to get frustrated. I want you to be happy and I want you to complete this stage. I will always be here for you. But I want you to continue moving forward.

*Tú vas a continuar porque tú eres fuerte. Tú no naciste para dejar las cosas botadas, yo no voy a decirte 'Ay mamita, vente para acá', porque te vas a frustrar. Yo quiero que tú seas feliz y quiero que cumplas esa etapa. Acá yo voy a estar siempre, voy a estar para ti. Pero yo quiero que tú sigas adelante.*

(Interview 1, lines 249-252)

After their talk, Señora Ana's daughter thanked her, told her she felt better, and was prepared to attend class.

Similarly, Señora Blanca who, more than any other participant knew in detail everything her daughter was going through in graduate school, told me that she too had to encourage her daughter to remain focused on completing her doctorate, even when she wanted to give up:

Two times she has attempted to drop out of her doctorate program, Natalia.

“Mom, I can’t take this; look, they humiliate me.” They would take her information, would have her do something and they wouldn’t keep her in mind to publish...and I told her “(daughter), you have so much potential, don’t let them”...in my house it is always (daughter) move forward (daughter) move forward because you can do this, you can do this.

*Ella dos veces ha intentado dejar el doctorado, Natalia. “Mami, yo no me aguanto esto, que vea, que me humillan” le sacan la información, le ponen a hacer una cosa, no le tiene en cuenta para publicar...mejor dicho...y yo “hija...usted tiene mucho potencial, no se deje.” ...en mi casa todo es (hija) pa delante (hija) pa’ delante que usted puede, que usted puede. (Interview 2, lines 186-190)*

### Structural Description

Parents spoke passionately about supporting and motivating their children. They were invested in their children’s success. This type of encouragement and support of Latino/a parents has been examined, oftentimes through the voice of students (Arellano & Padilla, 2006; Gándara, 1995; Gonzalez et al, 2012). In effect, researchers have



repeatedly cited parental encouragement and support as important contributors to Latino/a students' educational achievement at the undergraduate and graduate level (Achor & Morales, 1990; Arellano & Padilla, 2006; Gándara, 1982; 1994; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Zalaquett, 2005).

Parents believed they were significant contributors to their children's academic attainment and future success, in large part because they were a source of support, motivation and drive for their children. They did not mention it directly, but it was evident that these parents shared their children's struggle, emotion and hope. In this way, their children's long academic journey was also their journey. The journey of higher education comprised a collectivist experience, reflective of larger cultural values held by the Latino/a culture.

This theme highlighted Gándara's (1995) assertion that parents transmit to their children a culture of possibility by supporting and encouraging their aspirations. These parents did not have the opportunities that their daughters have had; the support and encouragement they provided was driven by their desire to see their children achieve more, go further, and take advantage of the opportunities provided. These parents realized their daughters' potential and wanted to do their part for it to be actualized.

### Theme 3: *Siempre Juntos* - High Levels of Interaction

#### Textural Description

It was quickly apparent that participants maintained high levels of communication and interaction with their daughters, both in frequency and quality. The parents talked about the close relationship, communication, and regular interactions they had with their daughters whether they lived at home or moved away for college. These close interactions remained as their daughters moved, often much further away, to graduate school. At the time of the interview, Señora Gabriela was the only parent who lived with her daughter, because her daughter temporarily moved back from a different state into her parents' house while she worked on her dissertation. Señora Celeste and Señor David lived approximately two hours away from their daughter. Señora Blanca, Señora Elsa, and Señor Federico lived in different states than their daughters, and Señora Ana's daughter resided in a different country.

In Señora Ana's case, she had inculcated in her daughter the importance of communication since childhood. She mentioned that good communication had always existed in her family. Now that her daughter was in graduate school, they communicated every day. That had been the case since her daughter left home to live closer to college. When her daughter first moved away, Señora Ana told her that the rule was that she had to communicate with her parents throughout the day, so that they could know where she was and could ensure she was safe. She explained that although she no longer tells her daughter to call her, it has become a habit:

So, now I don't have to tell her because she knows it is like a family rule to call and say "I'm here", call and say "I am leaving; I am going to bed", everything as if she was here. She calls to tell me "Good night" and she turns on Skype and tells me "I'm going to bed", then puts her covers on and turns it off.

*Entonces ya no se lo digo sino que ella ya sabe que es como una regla de familia llamar y decir "ya llegué" llamar y decir " ya me voy, ya me voy a acostar" todo como si estuviera acá. Ella me dice "buenas noches" y ella pone el Skype y me dice "ya me voy a acostar" y se pone la cobija y apaga (risa). (Interview 1, lines 303-306)*

Moreover, Señora Ana noted that there is not a day when she cannot find her daughter or has to wonder where she is. She expected her daughter would continue communicating frequently as she begins her doctoral program; perhaps even more so, because she will be able to visit more once she returns to the United States, even if she lives in a different state.

Señora Blanca alluded throughout the interview to her closeness to her daughter. Her daughter chose to reside with her while in college and throughout her Master's degree. Señora Blanca explained that when she asked her daughter whether she wanted to move away for college, her daughter said, "No mom, having you here, I think it is best that I stay at home"/"*no mamá, teniendo ya a usted aquí yo creo que es mejor yo seguir de aquí en la casa*" (Interview 2, lines 290-291). This closeness and high level of interaction were exemplified in Señora Blanca's recollection of helping her daughter move and settle as she moved away for her doctorate:

When she left to do her doctorate, I moved with her for three months. I organized her apartment; I bought her some furniture; and she took with her many things from the house, from her room...and then, after I left she stayed by herself, but of course, we talk at breakfast, lunch, and dinner

*Cuando ella se fue pa allá pa hacer el doctorado, yo me fui con ella tres meses...le organicé el apartamentico, le fui y le compré unos mueblecitos, ella se llevó de la casa mucha cosa, el cuarto de ella...y ya después de que yo me vine ella se quedó allá solita, pero eso sí, hablábamos a desayuno, almuerzo y comida. (Interview 2, lines 300-303)*

Señora Blanca indicated that they constantly communicate despite the distance. She joked, “I told her one day, ‘I think I’m going to end up graduating with you with a honorary degree’ (laughs) because she asks me about everything, she tells me everything: what she is doing, with whom she is doing it...”/“yo le dije un día, ‘yo creo que yo voy a terminar graduada con usted con un grado honorífico’ (risa) porque ella todo me lo pregunta, todo me lo dice, como esta haciendo con quien está haciendo...” (Interview 2, lines 67-69).

Señora Celeste and Señor David similarly shared that they speak with their daughter frequently. They spoke with their daughter everyday about school when she lived at home during college. “We always dedicated ourselves to her, all the time”/“nos dedicamos a ella siempre, todo el tiempo,” (Interview 3, lines 285) said Señora Celeste. Since her daughter left for graduate school, their dedication to their daughter has continued. Señora Celeste explained, “We speak with her through the phone, and we talk

to her everyday about how her day went; she explains the details; we give her advice based on what happened that day ....”/“*Hablamos con ella por teléfono, y hablamos todos los días como le fue el día, ella nos explica detalles, le damos el consejo basado en lo que ha pasado en el día...*” (Interview 3, lines 289-290). Señor David clarified that when their daughter first moved away they spoke every day, but they understand that their daughter is an adult and there are times when they cannot talk. At minimum, they always text each other goodnight or I love you.

Señora Elsa and Señora Gabriela, though still communicating frequently with their daughters, explained that their daughters placed some limits to their interactions. Señora Elsa noted:

Well in the beginning it was every day. And when I didn't hear from her one day, I would panic. And she goes, “Mom, I’m not going to keep in contact with you 24/7, um, you have to let go.” I go “It's kind of hard because you are over there, I'm over here, but I'm going to try.” And that's how we've been doing it, little by little she's pretty much cut the umbilical cord...which is hard, um as a mother, I want to hear her voice everyday...we don't talk every day, not because of me...and a little bit because of me...I have a job that I work every other day and I work 14, 16 hours so I don't, I don't um have the time to really sit and talk to her, so on my days off she'll call me or vice-versa I'll call her. But we keep in touch every other day or every two days.... (Interview 4, lines 180-187)

Señora Gabriela humorously remarked that if it was up to her, she and her daughter would have been in touch more often when she moved away, but she had to respect her daughter's limits:

If it was for me! (laughs) But she put limits because she was, she needed to have time. So, we decided that in the mornings she would let me know when she would leave the house and then when she came back. She would let me know her daily schedule so I wouldn't interrupt her. So, we agreed on that, but if it was for me (laughs), as an overprotective mother, ay ay ay. And when she didn't call me at the hour that she said she would call, I would give her another hour, and then I would start (does a gesture as if she is calling and sending texts), yes, because I am overprotective.

*¡Si por mi fuera! (risa). Pero ella me puso límites porque como estar...ella necesita tener tiempo. Si, entonces quedamos en la mañana me dejara saber cuando saliera de la casa y después cuando regresara. Que me dejara saber su horario del día para así yo no interrumpirla. Y si quedamos en eso, pero, si por mi fuera (risas) como madre sobreprotectora ay ay ay. Y cuando no me llamaba a la hora, pues, quedó de llamar, le daba una hora más, y después, empezaba (hace el gesto de que la está llamando/mandando textos), sí, porque, yo soy sobreprotectora. (Interview 4, lines 167-172)*

### Structural Description

This theme has a strong context in the value familism within Latino/a culture (Desmond & Turley, 2009). The participants' smiles, laughs, tone of voice, and positivity when sharing their close relationship with their children made clear that they basked in the closeness they had with their children. Despite distance, the inculcated values of familism were, in some ways, intact. These close interactions exemplified for parents that family also remained a strong priority for their children. It appeared to be a joy and an emotional need for them to consistently interact with their children, and more so as they moved far away. The parents who shared talking to their children everyday did so with a sense of pride. For those who talked about their children setting boundaries to their interactions (though still communicating often), the sense of disappointment was palpable.

Gloria and Castellanos (2012) indicated that some Latino/a students may feel burdened by family expectations, but for the majority of the parents who shared their close interactions there was no indication that they felt this burden existed for their children. Parents whose daughters had created boundaries in regard to communication or interactions verbalized respect for their children's decisions, but they did not discuss the reasons behind their children's desires to place boundaries beyond a need to be more independent. However, there was some palpable pain and powerlessness as these parents acknowledged they did not talk to their children as much as they would like.

Although having constant interactions with their children may be primarily a function of the parents' needs and desires, the context of these close relationships could

also be rooted in the children's need for support and their desire to prioritize family as they navigate the less familiar academic environment. These familiar interactions may have been a significant contributor to these students' high achievement while they were undergraduates and there may be a continuing need for these close relationships, despite the distance. In fact, close connections between parents and their children have been lauded as promoting academic success in first-generation high achieving students (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Reyes & Nora, 2012). In addition, contradicting seminal research on college students, Reyes and Nora (2012) proposed that "a strong 'separation' assumption as held by Tinto (1995) is not a necessary condition for transition and integration in college" (p. 15).

It is also important to consider how the rapid advancement of technology facilitates the constant and in-depth interaction that parents described. New technological developments (e.g., cell phones, text messaging, Skype, and Facebook), allow for easy and immediate communication between parties. Just a generation ago, these parents might not have had the ability to talk to their children as frequently. The proliferation of mediums of communication and access to affordable technology have created a new paradigm from which to understand these constant interactions.



#### Theme 4: *Por Primera Vez* - 'Experiencing' College and Children as Teachers

##### Textural Description

Although none of the participants possessed bachelor's degrees, they shared experiencing college through their daughters' journeys in different ways, some by actually traveling to the institution for events or to visit their children, others by learning with and from their children as they navigated the academic world together.

Señora Ana, who drove her daughter to college before she had a car, spoke with excitement about experiencing college in a myriad of ways. She explained how she felt about sitting in some of her daughter's classes and attending college events,

Oh yes, an experience. Because I had never entered a university. And I was there with her in classes. It was so beautiful...for me, it was enriching. Even cinema. A movie they were going to give, something very interesting. "There's a movie and you can be there". It was a beautiful topic. And I said "Yes, I'll go!" and I sat there to watch it.

*Oh si. una experiencia. Porque yo nunca había entrado a una universidad, y yo me estuve allá en clases. Fue muy bonito...para mi fue enriquecedora. Hasta cine. Una película que iban a dar, algo bien interesante, "hay esta película y tú puedes estar ahí." Era un tema bien bonito. Y yo "sí ¡yo voy!" y me senté allá a ver.*

(Interview 1, lines 397-400)

Señor Federico fondly remembers attending graduation – where they put a cap and gown on him: “Graduation...I enjoyed it. They even dressed me up, they put (the cap on me) and it is beautiful when one is around people. I never dreamed that in my life”/ *“la graduación...la disfruté. Bueno, hasta me vistieron, ellas me pusieron (the cap) y es lindo cuando uno está en medio de la gente. Esto no me lo soñé en mi vida”* (Interview 5, lines 238-239).

Señora Blanca, who was so involved with her daughter’s academic life shared that she felt as if it was her going to college,

I lived it, as if...as if it was I who was going to university because...I was so involved with her, I did everything possible so she would feel good...and any complaint she had we would have a conversation about...I would give her the little knowledge I had, and that way she moved forward, and she continues moving forward.

*Pues yo la, la viví, como...como si fuera yo la que estuviera en la universidad porque...me involucre mucho con ella y, y yo hice todo lo posible para que ella se sintiera bien...y cualquier queja que tuviera nos sentábamos a conversar.... le daba pues, los poquitos conocimientos que yo tenía, y ahí fue saliendo, y ahí va saliendo.* (Interview 2, lines 315-318)

A few parents discussed learning about their daughters’ academic fields. Señor Federico discussed conversations that he had with his daughter that centered on psychology, his daughter’s major, and reported that he learned from her through their conversations. Señora Celeste and Señor David reminisced about learning from their

daughter as she delved into her academic career. Because she lived with them during college, they recall studying with her:

Celeste: Oh yeah, we learned a ton of things!

David: Oh yeah...what we had was our own teacher

Celeste: And when she studied, she studied with us

David: It wasn't something that she would lock herself in her room to study. She would do that first, but the next day when she was available...we had a large board, white, and she would teach us. I have learned so much. We have learned the names of the bones, how they develop. How can I tell you, the education that they gave to her, that education multiplied through us.

*Celeste: ¡Oh yeah! ¡aprendimos un montón de cosas!*

*David: Oh yeah...lo que teníamos era un maestro de nosotros*

*Celeste: Y cuando estudiaba estudiaba con nosotros*

*David: No es algo que ella tiene que se encierra a su cuarto estudiar. Ella hace eso primero, pero al otro día que ella está disponible...tenemos un board bien grande, blanco, y ella ahí nos enseñado a nosotros. Yo he aprendido tanto. Hemos aprendido a los nombres de los huesos, los desarrollos. Como te digo, una educación que le pasaron a ella, y esa educación se multiplico por medio de nosotros. (Interview 3, lines 338- 342)*

Señora Gabriela shared that she was comfortable asking her daughter questions and that she has learned much from her. She noted:

Ah, I ask her, I ask her (laughs). When, well, because she has, she has had more opportunities to read books, to travel more... yeah, I ask her, and she...she...the roles changed. She knows more than me (laughs).

*Ah, yo le pregunto, yo le pregunto (risas). Yo cuando, bueno, puesto que ella tiene y ha tenido más oportunidades de leer más libros, de viajar más...pues si le pregunto, si...ella, esa red...ella...los papeles se cambiaron. Ella sabe más que yo (risa). (Interview 6, lines 292-294)*

### Structural Description

Familism within the Latino/a community provides a collectivistic lens for the college journey, inviting the parent to become a participant instead of a spectator. The experiences of participants highlight, without a doubt, that though it was their daughters who were pursuing degrees, they shared the journey through higher education. Parents told stories about their own “college experience” with smiles and pride. These were important moments for them. Whether they were stepping onto a college campus for the first time, sitting in a college class, or trying to help their child navigate the process, these parents were able to experience a piece of higher education.

Participants shared, with a sense of pride, the inversion of roles (children becoming teachers); there was a verbal recognition that, academically, the child knew more than they did. The context of this experience is based on the reality that the parents in this sample had an educational level well below what their children had the opportunity to achieve. However, as parents, they had been instrumental in helping their

children get where they were. As previously discussed, collectivistic values made them feel included in the experience as opposed to feeling less than their children.

#### Theme 5: *Amor Compasivo* - Distance, Pain and Sacrifice

##### Textural Description

A powerful theme that emerged from the data were the feelings of loss and pain that parents experienced as a result of the physical distance between them and their daughters as they embarked on their academic journeys. In their interviews, parents shared feelings and memories that they had not shared with their children. Because of the sensitivity of this section, the cited quotations have not been associated with any particular participant. Given that I could not share the interview lines or details in this section, my committee chair was provided the detailed information and ensured that the quotations reflected the interview data. In addition, all of the quotations have been shown only in English.

One parent described feeling a sense of relief when his/her child decided to attend college close to home. Though they were no longer living together, their daughter was only a short drive away:

...I felt very good that she would stay local (laughs). When I saw all the flyers that would come, I would always see that they were from New York, from California, from Chicago...I was always scared that so young she would move so far. I felt in some way relieved that she wouldn't be too far, that I could get there.

For instance, one day she got sick and I was able to go to her with soup and a tea; I felt good. It felt good that she would stay local.

But even for those parents whose daughters remained relatively close, the experience of seeing a child move away from home was at times difficult. A mother explained her experience as she helped her daughter move to an apartment near her undergraduate campus, less than an hour away from home. She discussed the strength it took for her to hide that pain:

And I cried from here to there, the entire way...and I told myself "I don't want to cry anymore so that she won't notice"...so I calmed down before getting there, all of that...I took a breath, put make-up on, put on dark glasses, because I told myself "I hope it doesn't show"...and when I saw her again I felt happiness, because she said "Oh, my apartment!", it was like I was living her happiness. We decorated and we put things...she didn't notice...and when I was going to leave I told her "(daughter) this is great that you are in your apartment"...but as soon as I got into the car I began again (to cry).

Participants repeatedly expressed feeling happy for their daughters as they embarked on their new journeys, but sad at the same time. This feeling was vividly illustrated by one parent who, realizing that the daughter would move away for graduate school, stated: "My face was like that of a sad clown, in other words, she saw me like a happy clown, (screams of happiness) but inside I was dying because she was leaving me." Another parent whose daughter moved far away to pursue her graduate career expressed similar concerns:

I was sad because I didn't want her to go away, um, I was in a situation when I needed her in my life, and that's when she decided she was moving on and...It was sad for me, very sad. I was very depressed. But at the same time very happy for her. It's mixed feelings...if you could say, happy for her, sad for me....

Participants indicated that the experience of seeing their daughters move for graduate school was very difficult, even if they had lived away from home as undergraduates. A parent shared,

...it's still difficult, because we are...back then it was in (state where college is located) I could go see her... or she could come down. Now we're miles away, so to go see her...I've been to (state where graduate school is located) once for her (Master's) graduation, that was it... you know it's hard not to share a lot of holidays and...And I'm basically here by myself, so you know, it's depressing, very depressing.

Similarly, another parent noted,

So, yes, an empty nest. I felt very sad. And I would go to her room and cry...and yes...I suffered a lot, but I would hide it, I wouldn't let her know. I had to support her. I mean, I had to support her because I won't be here forever.

Another parent was emotional in discussing the need to withstand the pain of distance when the daughter moved to another state for graduate school:

...I felt so bad bad bad, I didn't think I was going to be able to deal with that...and when we left with her belongings I asked myself if I would be able to come back home. My dear God, that was very hard, very hard, very hard!

Beyond the sadness that parents felt at seeing their daughters move away from home, they also talked about keeping sicknesses, sadness, or difficult situations from their children. They believed that knowing those challenges might affect their children negatively in their academic and personal endeavors. One mother observed,

...but I didn't tell her many things to, to maintain her emotional stability and to contribute to her in the distance so that she would have a more serene day for her studies because she already had enough with the stress of school, the streets. But yeah, there are many things that, as a mother, eh, like they say, compassionate love (laughs). You go through a lot, you leave it, don't tell her. I tried to only tell her the good things, to shield her, as they say.

Other parents echoed this sentiment. Similarly, they shared only positive things and hid any harsh circumstances they may be experiencing. Others reported never letting their daughters know how much they missed them in order to keep them from worrying about them and distracting them from their academics or their lives in graduate school. One parent said:

...missing her so much but not showing her. Supporting her through my voice. That...there are good and bad days. I tried for her not to know about my bad days because I felt they would affect her every day. So, supporting her emotionally.

Another parent did not let the daughter know even when she felt down or sick, because she already had enough to worry about:

Of course, there are times when I feel sick, bad, and I am thinking about her...so many things occur in those universities; I want to faint here by myself. And I



say, “God protect her, take care of her for me,” but, there are times when I get sick and I don’t tell her so that she won’t worry...One can’t give her too much to think about, because with her academics being so hard, the relationships there being so hard, and for me to give her another job by complaining all the time? No, that is not for me.

Beyond keeping their own challenges and feelings hidden from their children in order to protect them, some of the participants spoke with emotion and powerlessness about the concerns they had for their children as they undertook the long PhD journey. Parents alluded to worrying about the physical safety of their daughters. One parent noted,

Yes, worries that we can’t do anything about, for example, I think all parents have this worry – what is happening at universities. There is a lot of anti-social people or people who are terrorists, whatever it is. I worry, but I don’t share it with her because I think that universities are providing them information about this.

Another parent worried about the toll that graduate school would have on the emotional and physical health of his/her daughter:

Well, my worry is that she has invested so much of her life, so much of her health in her academic career. That is my worry. I would like to tell her ‘Don’t study anymore. That’s enough’, because her health is very affected. That is my worry.

Similarly, a parent shared concerns about how hard his/her daughter worked and the stress that had been brought on by the academic career path. The parent said, “... I want

time to go by quickly, she has too many years studying, studying; I want to see her in another stage, but ok...in the same way I support her and I stay quiet.”

Finally, one parent talked about his/her daughter being discriminated against and that this could derail her academic career. The parent spoke with emotion about the harshness of the environment and the difficult journey the daughter has had, something that clearly also affected the parent:

I think that the main worry I have at this moment is that maybe they will discriminate against her so much that she will say “I can’t do it anymore” and she will explode...this is a deep worry...but I pray to God a lot...that He will give peace to my girl...

### Structural Description

The deep pain felt by parents when their daughters left home and the continuation of that longing through the academic journey to graduate school, as exuded in the interview and reflected in the narrative, provided unique insights as to the context that may have led to these uniformly very emotional reactions. The expectations within Latino/a culture that family will remain together may be so ingrained that the reality of a child leaving the nest is not something for which parents have prepared themselves, as in more individualistic cultures. Moreover, gender expectations of daughters as caregivers, and the heightened levels of interdependence expected from daughters may play a role in the feelings of discomfort and loss experienced by the parents (Hurtado & Sinha, 2006; Espinoza, 2010). This was illustrated by one of the parents who, after sharing that she

made a promise to her daughter when she was a child that she would never leave her, reflected, “I made the promise and I have always been there. I never thought the promise had to also come from her...I mean, it didn’t have to...but I thought because I made it we would always be (together).

Familism, putting family above self, provides a context as to why the parents kept their feelings and challenges from their daughters. Parents, in this case, could suffer in silence because they believed that the peace of mind and eventual success of their children were more important than their own desire to seek help or comfort. Their instincts to protect their daughters provided them the strength they needed to move forward without burdening their children. However, parents’ deep care and connection to their children led them to want to protect them; and knowing or sensing the difficulties that their children faced filled them with worry and anxiety. Gender expectations may also influence parents concern for their children’s physical well-being, as parents often raise their female children with less independence and stricter rules than their male counterparts (Hurtado & Sinha, 2006)

Another factor that may have influenced how parents experienced their children’s departures could be related to the reality that the majority of parents had low levels of formal education and performed low-skilled jobs. Although these parents may enjoy their jobs, low skill labor jobs are generally not pursued out of passion; nor do they have well defined career paths that can lead to upward mobility. Typically, these types of jobs are performed with the main goal of providing for self or family. Given this reality, it is likely that many of these parents worked and “lived” for their children, not to fulfill

personal goals or aspirations, making the transition of their child being away from the home even more painful and disconcerting, as the parents' identities were closely tied to those of their children.

#### Theme 6: *Que Se Sienta Satisfecha* - Wishes for Fulfilling Career

##### Textural Description

When the question of what their expectations and hopes were for their daughters during and after grad school was posed, parents not only expressed that they wanted their daughters to complete their academic journeys, but importantly, they stressed that they wanted their daughters to feel proud of themselves and to feel fulfilled in their careers.

When sharing his hopes for his daughter, Señor Federico hoped she would finish her education as best she could, and then move to where she could find a job. He recalled the advice his mother gave him which highlighted his desire for his daughter to be happy, even if far away: “When I was in Honduras my mom would tell us, ‘Go wherever you want, to China, to Russia, wherever makes you happy’”/“*cuando estaba en Honduras mi mamá nos decía, ‘vayanse para donde usted quieran, para la China, para Rusia, para donde sean felices’*” (Interview 5, lines 345-347).

For his part, Señor David indicated that his primary wish was that his daughter would complete her PhD, but he made clear that he did not expect anything from her, that as long as she accomplished what she wanted to accomplish, he was proud of her:

That she completes her PhD that is number one. And secondly, I don't expect anything from her because everything I wanted she did in high school, she did (in college); and I told her, everything you do is for yourself. You have to feel proud of yourself, not for me, for mami, just for you. And she feels very proud, and her face becomes so brilliant that it reflects us. If she wants to be the manager or cook at McDonalds, or if she wants to be the president of the United States, everything is the same to me...

*Que ella termine su PhD. eso es el número uno. Y el segundo, yo no espero nada de ella porque todo lo que yo quería ella lo hizo en el high school, lo hizo en (la universidad), y yo le dije, todo lo que tú hagas es para ti. You have to feel proud of yourself, not for me, for mami, just yourself. Pues ella se siente muy orgullosa, y la cara de ella se pone tan brillante que eso refleja a nosotros. Si ella quiere ser el manager o cook de McDonald's, o si quiere ser el presidente del United States, todo es igual para mí... (Interview 3, lines 463-468)*

Señora Elsa shared the advice she gave her daughter, highlighting that money should not be the main goal of a career, but instead, personal fulfillment:

When she was younger she, and I tell this to everybody, she brought a book and she said "Let me see what job pays" (laughs) and I said, "You know what, you can't really go by that. You may have a job that pays thousands and thousands of dollars and you are miserable; you don't want to go to work. This is something that you are going to do for the rest of your life; if you are going to be miserable, make a little less money but that you are happy doing what you are doing"... She

never even told me about it, but I imagine that sunk into her. (Interview 4, lines 274-280)

Moreover, some of the parents shared that they wished that beyond the PhD, their daughters would be able to make a broader impact with their knowledge and skills. Like Señora Elsa, Señora Blanca mentioned that money was not the most important thing, and that after her daughter completed her doctorate, she wished to see her daughter be able to make the difference she hopes to make,

...And after graduation, that God gives her a job in which she can feel satisfied...that money is necessary, but it doesn't matter as much, as long as she can feel satisfied and can do everything she wants to for the homeless children, for the children who are discriminated against, for all those things.

*...Y después de la graduación, que Dios me le dé un trabajo donde pueda sentirse satisfecha...que la plata pues hace falta, pero la plata no importaría tanto, si no que pueda sentirse satisfecha y pueda hacer todo lo que ella quiere por la niñez desamparada, por los niños que discriminan, y por todas esas cosas. (Interview 2, lines 414-417)*

Señora Ana also shared her desire that her daughter make a difference in their world, “That is my expectation, that she achieves her dream as a professional woman, and secondly, that she makes a big difference in her field”/“*esa es como mi expectativa que ella logre su sueño como mujer profesional, y segundo...que está marcando una diferencia grande...en el área de ella, donde ella se mueve*” (Interview 1, lines 484-486).

### Structural Description

Parents perhaps have little insight regarding the financial benefits that a PhD provides. They may have less knowledge about their children's specific career path than they would about professional paths such as medicine or law. This could explain parents' main concern and focus on children's present and future sense of accomplishment and satisfaction with their lives. This may also explain why parents did not discuss hoping that their children would achieve prestige or have the financial flexibility to support the family.

The desire for their children to be satisfied and to make a positive impact in the world may also be rooted in the fact that these parents have witnessed their children's academic journey, which can be stressful and arduous. With the expectation that those things that their child has been working so hard to accomplish will be fruitful, these parents may simply want to see their children reap the fruits of their labor as they move on to a life that does not involve schooling.

### Minor Themes

#### Theme 1: *Sufrimiento Económico* – Financial Concerns

### Textural Description

In three of the interviews, Señora Ana, Señora Celeste/Señor David, and Señora Elsa described financial concerns as one of the most difficult challenges they experienced as parents. Beyond being worried, these parents described the deep emotional anguish

they felt at their inability to provide financial support for their children's education.

Señora Ana described with emotion her fear at the possibility that her daughter could not attend a university due to her limited financial resources: "I suffered because of financial aspects. I would say to myself, I hope that she can go to a university because we don't have the means to pay for a good university. That was my internal suffering"/ *"A mi me tocó sufrir en la parte económica. De decir, ojala que pueda ir a una Universidad porque no tenemos los medios para pagarle una Buena Universidad. Ese era mi sufrimiento interno"* (Interview 1, lines 44-45).

Señora Celeste had concerns similar to those of Señora Ana when her daughter decided to pursue her doctorate. She commented, "The most difficult experience was when she decided to pursue her PhD, that we didn't know how we could get the funding. That was the deepest worry that we had ever experienced"/ *"la experiencia mas difícil fue cuando ella decidió coger el PhD que nosotros no sabíamos como conseguir el funding. Eso fue lo mas profundo que nosotros experimentamos"* (Interview 3, 388-391). Her husband, Señor David, echoed these sentiments.

Finally, Señora Elsa discussed the challenges her own daughter experienced because of limited finances:

The most difficult is the struggle she's had to go through and she's been through a lot...money wise it's a big issue for students to make it to college...and then on top of that having to pay for the education, it's it's hard. She's had to get loans, and it's been hard, I wish I could make those loans disappear, but you know, that's the only way to go and...move on.... (Interview 4, lines 219-222)



She continued, lamenting her inability to help her daughter financially and the pain that caused her, noting “Yes, yes yes, the struggle that I haven’t been able to help her, yes, that’s been hard for me. I’m going to be honest. Very hard” (Interview 4, lines 224-225).

### Structural Description

The emotional toll these participants experienced due to their inability to financially facilitate their children’s academic experience speaks of their immense desire to see their children succeed with as little burden as possible. These participants likely believed that, as parents, they should be able to provide for their children even when they knew they simply did not have the means to do so. This sentiment echoed Auerbach’s (2004) finding that Latino/a low-income parents in her study worried about the finances associated with a college degree.

In regard to Señora Ana and Señora Celeste/Señor David, who worried about whether their daughters could afford to pursue their educational goals, part of their concerns could have been due to not knowing the financial aid process or the help available to their children. Knowing how the process works and that there were means by which their children could attain aid might have appeased their own fears and anxiety about the future of their children.

### Theme 2: *Que Dios La Cuide* – God/Faith

Although the role of faith was not directly assessed by the interview questions, the narratives by Señora Ana, Señora Blanca and Señor Federico brought to light the

importance of God and faith to these parents. It was their belief in God and their trust in Him that pacified their fears. In addition, they sought to pass on this belief and faith in God to their children through their words and guidance.

It was clear that Señora Ana deeply believed in God. As she said, “I am a woman of faith”/ *“Yo soy una mujer de fé”* (Interview 1, lines 291-292). When her daughter shared her worry that she would not be accepted into college, Señora Ana immediately began to pray. She stated, “...I kneeled in front of the computer and prayed. And I told her – this application, God will send it to the university and the right person will read it and will say ‘Yes, we want this girl here’”/ *“Entonces yo me arrodille ante el computador y ore. Y le dije – esta aplicación Dios la va a mandar a la Universidad y la va a leer la persona indicada y va a decir ‘si, queremos esta niña acá”* (Interview 1, lines, 292-294). Later, she mentioned that she often brings up God to her daughter. It is through this faith that she encouraged her daughter who was struggling in graduate school to stay strong in her path because “God put you there”/ *“Dios te puso alla”* (Interview 1, line 244).

Señora Blanca similarly encouraged her daughter to have faith in God. When her daughter was having a difficult time in her doctoral program, Señora Blanca would advise her, “(daughter) share it with God, God first of all. When you wake up, tell him ‘God, I offer you this day and help me finish this’ and that is what she did, on days which, as I told you, were very distressing” (Interview 2, lines 305-306).

Though Señor Federico did not talk about his faith as directly as Señora Ana and Señora Blanca, he discussed using the bible to guide and discipline his daughter when she was young: “Sometimes I would mention biblical phrases to her which are advice from

parents to children”/ “*Algunas veces yo le mencionaba algunas frases bíblicas que son consejos para los padres y para los hijos*” (Interview 5, line 46). This faith in God also helped him trust that his daughter would be ok without him, as he noted “May God alone guide her in her journey” / “*Que Dios la acompañe nada mas en su viaje*” (Interview 5, Line, 290).

### Textural Description

The participants’ faith seemed to afford them with tools to provide tangible guidance and support to their children who are navigating unfamiliar situations. Their knowledge that God was with their children and that He was leading their path, helped these parents feel like they were helping their children stay strong in difficult situations, while at the same time soothing their own concerns and anxieties. For these parents, God and faith appears to have served as an anchor that provided them with a source of comfort.

### Summary

In this chapter, I have examined the steps taken to reduce the data and identify themes central to the experience of Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing a PhD. The major themes identified are:

1. *Pero la Apoyo* - Uncertainty and Support for the PhD
2. *Del Apoyo al Empuje* - Support, Motivation, and Push
3. *Siempre Juntos* - High Levels of Interaction

4. *Por Primera Vez* - Experiencing College and Children as Teachers
5. *Amor Compasivo* - Distance, Pain, and Sacrifice
6. *Que Se Sienta Satisfecha* - Wishes for a Fulfilling Career

Minor themes included are:

1. *Sufrimiento Económico* - Financial Concerns
2. *Que Dios la Cuide* - God/Faith

These themes represented the participants' narratives, as well as their unique perspectives. Utilizing a Transcendental Phenomenology approach, these themes were presented through textural and structural descriptions, and they are utilized in the next chapter to distill the essence of the phenomenon.

CHAPTER 6  
RESEARCH QUESTIONS: PARENTS' UNIQUE ANSWERS

Research Question 1

*How do parents of first-generation Latina/o students pursuing a PhD recall their personal experience as their children navigated their academic journey?*

This research question focused on what Moustakas (1994) called the essence of the experience. In order to arrive at the essence, the textural and structural descriptions examined in Chapter 5 were synthesized into a cohesive description of the phenomenon. The role of these descriptions was to capture the meaning attributed to the phenomenon.

Essence of the Phenomenon

Parents of first-generation Latino/a students pursuing a PhD recalled their personal experience through their children's academic journey with mixed emotions. They felt an overwhelming sense of pride and satisfaction in regard to their children's significant accomplishments. As contributors to their children's academic success, these parents basked in their children's higher education experience which they were also experiencing for the first time. They dutifully and lovingly provided support, motivation, and guidance so that their children could accomplish what they never had the opportunity to accomplish – to find, pursue, and live a fulfilling and meaningful career that gives them purpose.

On the other hand, their experience was also one of loss, longing, and worry. Although these parents were supportive of their children's dreams, they did not necessarily understand the journey or its benefits, and worried about the toll this journey

would have on them and their children. The values of collectivism and familism were tested, as they realized that their children's academic career would take them away, and that they had to let them go. Once children moved away, whether close or far, a longing for their children appeared which could only be filled by their physical proximity. At the same time, there was an expectation that, as much as possible, emotional connections would remain strong. These parents relished the constant interactions with their children, which brought them closer and made them feel connected despite the distance. Further, they believed they contributed to their children's success by protecting them – hiding their sadness, their challenges, and their fears. Serving as a support system, they listened to their children's struggles, sensed their stress, and provided them encouragement; In turn, this led to the concern, worry, and helplessness that constantly accompanied them as part of their own experience.

#### Research Question 2:

*What impact do parents perceive that their child's educational journey had on themselves or other members of their family?*

Parents viewed their child attending graduate school as a positive example for siblings and family members. These graduate students became a road map for others in their family to follow, making it feasible for others to achieve. Parents also discussed the collective feeling of pride as extended family members inquired about their child's academic journey and encouraged their success. Finally, parents derived their own sense of accomplishment and pride from their child's journey.

Parents shared that their child's high academic achievement had an impact on younger family members, describing them as role models for others. Three of the graduate students were the oldest children in their families, and their mothers explained how they influenced their younger siblings. Señora Elsa shared that her son looked up to his sister and was influenced by her academic achievements. He graduated with his bachelor's degree from the same school as his sister and was presently in a good job. Señora Ana remarked that her teenage daughter had been most impacted by the academic journey of her older sister. She believed that because her oldest daughter pursued a higher education her younger daughter also felt compelled to pursue an academic path: "because (my youngest daughter) already knows she has to go to college, she knows that she has to pursue a career"/"*porque (la hija menor) ya sabe que tiene que ir al college, ella ya sabe que tiene que hacer una carrera*" (Interview 1, lines 495-496). Furthermore, Señora Ana explained that her younger daughter wanted to follow in her sister's footsteps and pursue a PhD in science.

Similarly, Gabriela shared that her daughter has been an example and influenced her two younger siblings:

Yes, yes, especially her two sisters. They don't want to be left behind. They feel like they need to reach higher. And yes, yes, I have told (my daughter) that I thank her...that she didn't have to do it because she had options, but yes, I thank God for her because she has always been a good example for her sisters, and I feel that she has influenced them a lot being the first. Is incredible how the first

(child) goes, if she has opportunity to become better, how she can impact everyone else.

*Sí, sí, sobre todo en sus dos hermanas. Ellas no se quieren quedar atrás. Ellas sienten que tienen que alcanzar. Y sí, sí, yo le he dicho a (mi hija) que le agradezco, que no tenía que hacerlo porque tiene sus opciones, pero sí, le doy gracias a Dios que ella sea así porque ella ha sido muy buen ejemplo para sus hermanas, y siento que que ella ha influenciado mucho en ser la primera. Es, es increíble como la primera vaya, que tenga la oportunidad de superarse, como puede impactar a los demás. (Interview 6, lines 301-306)*

Parents also mentioned the impact that their child had on cousins and other family members. Señora Ana, Señora Gabriela, and Señor David explicitly mentioned that their daughters had been role models for their cousins. Señor David shared, “So her cousins always call her for advice, because they say ‘Wow, if (she) could, then we can too’”/“*Entonces las primas y los primos siempre la llaman por consejos porque ellos dicen ‘Wow si (ella) pudo entonces sí nosotros podemos’*” (Interview 3, lines 422-424).

Señor Federico explained that though there were younger members of his family who admired his daughter’s accomplishments, they did not want to follow in her academic path. However, his daughter was a role model to a young second cousin:

Oh, I don’t think so because the family members who are young, they don’t accept any of that. They admire her because of what she is accomplishing. Even when she talks to them and tells them “let’s study” and “do this”, they don’t want to. But there’s a little girl that she, that she has her like her hero so she spends



time with that girl – “Look, I want you to study, I will be working and if I can I will help you.”

*Oh, no lo creo porque algunos miembros que son jóvenes ya ellos ya no aceptan nada de eso. La admiran a ella por lo que ella está haciendo. Aunque ella hable con ellos y les explique que "vamos a estudiar" y que "hagan esto" no quieren. Pero hay una niñita que si esta ella, la tiene como quien dice, su héroe. Entonces con esa niñita ella pasa – “Mira quiero que estudies, yo ya voy a estar trabajando y si yo puedo yo te voy a ayudar.” (Interview 5, lines 374-378)*

Beyond the influence that their daughters had on younger members of the family, parents discussed the pride the entire family felt as an impact of their daughters’ academic journey. Señor Federico reflected that if his daughter had not chosen to study, he would not have felt fulfilled. Although he made clear that his daughter was the one who chose her career, he was always supportive of her choices, and his daughter’s path gave him a sense of satisfaction. Moreover, he shared that his entire family was very proud of his daughter’s accomplishments:

My entire family admires her for what she has accomplished, because some of my brothers, their children, they didn’t want to do anything. They studied until high school and from there they didn’t continue. And they ask me how it’s going for her, how she is doing, that it is so beautiful that she is studying...so it is a spiritual support...

*Toda mi familia la sigue admirando por lo que ella ha conseguido, porque algunos de mis hermanos, sus hijos, no quisieron hacer nada. Estudiaron hasta high school y de ahí no siguieron. Y me siguen preguntando que cómo va, que cómo le va, que que lindo que esté estudiando...entonces como que es un apoyo espiritual....* (Interview 5, lines 316-319)

Señora Ana also expressed her pride and the pride of her family, commenting, “Oh yeah, the family is very proud, very proud. And me, as a mother, noooo, better said, I feel like I achieved one of my goals as a mom”/“*Oh sí, pues la familia súper orgullosa. Súper orgullosísima. Y yo como madre, nooo, mejor dicho, sentí que cumplí una de las metas mías como mamá.*” (Interview 1, lines 460-461). Señora Blanca similarly shared the overwhelming feeling of pride she had:

My siblings and other family members from here in Colombia and everything, they congratulated her and said that she was the first in the family that had achieved an accomplishment like that. That she should work hard, that she needs to keep moving forward and that they hoped to see that title. All of that filled me with a deep happiness and a feeling of “My God, my daughter will be the first.” And that, the happiness doesn’t fit in your chest, Natalia, because of the family, she is the first that would get to achieve that, a doctorate...

*Los hermanos míos y los familiares de aquí en Colombia y todo, la felicitaron y dijeron, okay, que era la primera de la familia que iba a llegar a un punto de esos. Que luchara, y que pa adelante y que esperaban ver ese título. Entonces*

*todo eso me llenó a mí de una alegría inmensa y de una sensación de ‘Ay Dios mío, mi hija va a ser la primera’ y eso, mejor dicho, la alegría no le cabe a uno en el pecho Natalia, porque de la familia es la primera que va a llegar a hacer eso, un doctorado... (Interview 2, lines 379-383)*

### Research Question 3:

*How do Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing a PhD describe their parenting role?*

The answer to this research question is encapsulated by a number of interview items that covered the various characteristics delineated by Parent Development Theory (PDT): bonding, discipline, education, welfare and protection, responsivity and sensitivity (Appendix A). Parents’ perceptions of how they demonstrated each parenting characteristic to their children are examined in detail in this section.

Setting the context for the series of items which delved into PDT, each participant was first asked: “What do you think is the role of a parent?” It was a very broad question, and in asking it, I worried that the participants would be overwhelmed or confused. However, they had succinct answers that explained how they viewed their roles in parenting their child. What was most surprising was the uniformity of the answers. As highlighted in Table 7, keywords used included support, guide, and motivate.

Table 7

*Keywords Used in Response to Interview Question 1*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Keywords (Spanish)</b>	<b>Keywords (English)</b>
<b>Ana</b>	Apoyar, Empujar, Amor, Confianza	Support, Drive (Push), Love, Trust
<b>Blanca</b>	Dedicarsele al niño, tiempo con calidad, dandole buenos ejemplos, inculcando el estudio	Dedicate self to child, time with quality, giving them good examples, inculcating education
<b>Celeste</b>	Apoyar (en todo lo que ellos quieren triunfar)	Support (in everything they want to accomplish)
<b>Elsa</b>	N/A	Guide (in right direction), get them educated, (make sure they have) manners, (prepare them) to be on their own
<b>Federico</b>	Motivar (para que hagan cosas mejores que nosotros...)	Motivate (to do better things than we could...)
<b>Gabriela</b>	Apoyar (a todo lo que ellas quieran emprender...)	Support (in everything they want to take on in their lives)

The answers that parents provided echoed the second theme identified in the study (*Del Apoyo al Empuje*: Support, Motivation, and Push), as parents discussed supporting, motivating and pushing their children. Thus, the overarching finding in response to this question was that parents largely viewed the parenting role as one of supporting, motivating, and guiding their children to accomplish their goals through education, thus helping them achieve fulfillment and success.

## Bonding

The first PDT characteristic examined was bonding. Mowder (2005) defined bonding as encompassing the love and affection that parents feel and display towards their children. Parents were asked to describe how they showed their love and affection to their daughters when they were children and adolescents, and after they started their higher education journey. The questions focused on how parents displayed their love and affection to their children. The answers provided by parents encompassed two dimensions: (a) physical and verbal expression of love and (b) expressions of love through quality time and support. The theme of familism, which was theorized to be connected with this characteristic for Latino/a parents (Figure 1) was present and is discussed.

### Physical and Verbal Expressions of Love

Señora Elsa, Señora Celeste, Señor Federico, and Señora Blanca discussed demonstrating their affection toward their children through consistent physical and verbal expressions of love. They demonstrated their love by giving their children hugs, kisses and telling them “I love you.” Señor Federico also shared words of encouragement, “Everyday a hug, ‘I love you, I want you to study, I want you to get ahead’ almost every day it was the same song”/ *“Todos los días un abrazo, ‘la quiero, quiero que usted estudie, quiero que usted salga adelante’ todos los días casi era el mismo canto”* (Interview 5, lines 32-33). Once his daughter left for college and then graduate school,

he and his wife would call her every day and repeat very similar words along with encouragement.

Señora Blanca used the word *cariño*, which translates to affection or care, to illustrate how she showed love toward her child. Although not explicitly denoting a verbal or physical action, *cariño* signifies the possibility of both, the verbal and/or physical demonstration of love. Señora Blanca said, “I would give her all the affection I could”/ “*Pues yo era darle todo el cariño que más pudiera*” (Interview 2, Line 59).

#### Dedicating Time and Providing Support

Señora Ana and Señora Gabriela explained that dedicating time and being there to support their children demonstrated their love and affection. For example, Señora Ana replied, “always being with her”/ “*estando siempre con ella*” (Interview 1, line 52). This was reflected in her decision to quit her job when her daughter was young in order to stay home with her. Even as her daughter moved away for college and then further to graduate school, Señora Ana noted that she has always been there for her daughter, providing support.

Señora Gabriela similarly believed that she demonstrated her love and affection for her daughter as a child and as an adult by always being there for her: “...always thinking about her, eh, showing her that I was always there for her. That my days have 24 hours in which she was always present”/ “*...estando pendiente de ella, eh, mostrándole que estaba allí para ella siempre. Que mis días tenían 24 horas en los cuales ella estaba presente*” (Interview 6, lines 36-37).

Señora Blanca and Señora Celeste discussed that communication became the vehicle through which bonding took place, a way for parents to support their children near and far. Señora Blanca shared spending hours on the phone with her daughter, being there for her emotionally in the distance: “I show her love and affection...she calls me and we talk and me...with that love and that thing, I attend to her calls, many times for three or four hours”/“*le demuestro amor y afecto...ella me llama y conversamos, y yo con ese amor y con esa cosa yo le atiendo las llamadas, muchas veces por tres y cuatro horas*” (Interview 2, lines 73-74). Señora Blanca specifically highlighted that her daughter asked for her advice and *consejos*, and this was one of the ways she demonstrated her affection.

Señora Celeste shared that she expressed her love by providing *consejos*/advice to her daughter. She stated that her family would sit together at the table to have conversations and provide advice to their daughter through her different life stages. Finally, Señora Elsa shared that once her daughter went to college she demonstrated her love and affection through communication and quality time, “Basically when she went to college it was just umm, calls, we would communicate and we would do Skype. She would visit. Every time she’d visit, we’d have that contact together, get time, quality time together. But nothing's changed, nothing's changed with me and her.” (Interview 4, lines 54-56).

## Familism

It is important to note that beyond dedicating time and providing support, the responses of Señora Ana, Señora Gabriela, and Señora Blanca alluded to the value of familism. In Señora Ana's case, she decided to leave her job because she believed that her daughter needed her, although that decision had financial implications; thus, she placed the needs of her daughter above everything else. Señora Gabriela's words revealed that her daughter was always present in her mind, and that her daughter and her daughter's needs were a priority in her own life. Señora Blanca's response, that she dedicated hours to her daughter, also highlighted this value. Interestingly, she also reflected familism in a different way. She shared that she inculcated in her daughter the love for family:

The time I had with her was very short...I taught her that family is a priority, that the family must be loved, respected...and all of that I taught her, and until now she cares about her family a lot and respects them. She would die for her family.

*Entonces el tiempo que me quedaba a mí era muy poquito...yo le enseñaba que la familia era primero que todo, que la familia había que quererla, respetarla...y todo eso lo inculqué, y hasta el presente esta niña quiere mucho a su familia y la respeta. Ella muere por su familia. (Interview 2, lines 60-63)*

## Discipline

The concept of discipline within PDT describes the limits placed on children by parents and the manner in which parents ensure that those limits are respected (Mowder,



2005). Participants described providing discipline to their children through (a) communication and respect and (b) utilizing rules and discipline as a tool for teaching appropriate behavior.

### Communication and Respect

When asked how they set limits and provided discipline for their daughters when they were children and adolescents, Señor Federico, Señora Celeste, and Señora Ana described communication and respect as important vehicles they used to discipline and set limits. Señor Federico discussed wanting to ensure that his daughter respected him and her mother, but did not fear them. He spoke of communication, advice, and ensuring that his daughter's feelings were not hurt. He shared,

Eh, we had to be very careful with discipline, that it wasn't military style, very flexible, and with many kind words so that we wouldn't hurt her. Sometimes I would mention biblical phrases to her which are advice from parents to children...let's make sure our children respect us, not make them afraid of us, and from that point we also start at home.

*eh, tuvimos que tener mucho cuidado con la disciplina, que no fuera tipo militar, muy flexible, y muchas palabras bonitas que no no no la fuéramos a lastimar.*

*Que algunas veces yo le mencionaba algunas frases bíblicas que son consejos para los padres y para los hijos. ... hagamos que los niños o los hijos nos respeten, no que nos tengan miedo, y de ese punto partimos también en la casa. (Interview 5, lines 44-52)*

Señora Celeste explained that, as a child, she disciplined her daughter by telling her right from wrong, and through a reward and consequences system. In addition, Señora Celeste explained that communication was an important part of her strategy for discipline: “The second type of discipline was explaining the reason why she was being disciplined”/“*La segunda disciplina fue hablando con ella y explicándole la razón por la que yo la disciplinaba*” (Interview 3, lines, 90-91).

#### Tool for Teaching Appropriate Behavior

Señora Ana and Señora Gabriela discussed setting rules and enforcing discipline as a way to prepare their children for the outside world. Señora Ana highlighted utilizing rules as a way to educate her children to comport themselves outside of the home. She stated,

I have always had rules in my house and I teach them with love, and I tell them before setting a rule that I want them to learn at home what they have to demonstrate outside of the house. If not, society is too cruel and doesn't accept a child without rules.

*Siempre he tenido reglas en mi casa y les enseño con amor y les digo antes de ponerles una regla que yo quiero que ellas aprendan bien en la casa lo que tienen que demostrar fuera de la casa. Porque si no la sociedad es muy cruel, y la sociedad no acepta un niño sin reglas.* (Interview 1, lines 79-81)

Echoing the sentiment that discipline was a way to ensure her daughter was ready for the outside world, Señora Gabriela noted “discipline, preparing her for the future. And

teaching her discipline so that she could face life when she wasn't with me out there"/ "*Y la disciplina, preparando para el futuro. Y enseñándole la disciplina para que pudiera enfrentar la vida cuando no estuviera conmigo afuera*" (Interview 6, lines 44-46).

Once their children went to college and graduate school, parents reported having fewer rules and trusting their children to discipline themselves. Señora Ana mentioned that when her daughter left for college she took with her all the teaching her family had inculcated in her. She stated, "We knew who she was when she went to live on her own"/ "*...supimos lo que ella era cuando se fue a vivir sola*" (Interview 1, lines 106 - 110). Similarly, Señora Gabriela shared that she did not set limits or provide discipline to her daughter once she went to college or graduate school because she trusted her. She stated:

...I felt that she was prepared and I had enough trust. I knew she would do the right thing, and I had and I have a lot of trust in her. And I knew that she did not need for me to be on top of her but I knew that each day she was doing the right thing because I had trust in her, she had learned everything.

*... yo sentí que ella ya estaba preparada y tenía la suficiente confianza, sabía que iba a hacer lo correcto, y tenía tenía y tengo mucha confianza en ella y sé que que no necesitaba, este, yo estar encima de ella si no yo sé que cada día estaba haciendo lo correcto porque yo tenía mucha confianza en ella, ya había aprendido todo.* (Interview 6, lines 55-58)

## Education

According to Mowder (2005) the concept of education within PDT encompasses teaching and guidance using communication and information. Participants (a) promoted the value of education, (b) provided direct and indirect academic support, and (c) promoted the idea of *educación* which goes beyond formal schooling to include moral values and social training (Durand, 2010; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy 2006). Supporting the literature, parents did not discuss interacting with the school, but they did emphasize academic, moral, cultural and social education within the home.

### Promoting the Value of Education

Señora Celeste discussed consistently telling her daughter that education was a priority, "...I would always tell her, 'Your education is first. You have to do your school work first, your priority; and later if you want to go out with your friends I don't have any problem with that, you can go out with your friends'"/ "...*Yo siempre le decía, 'la educación es lo primero. Tú tienes que hacer, esto, tú trabajo de la escuela primeramente, tú prioridad, y después si tú quieres salir con tus amigos no tengo ningún problema, puedes salir con ellos'*" (Interview 3, lines 112-115).

Señora Elsa promoted the value of education in a different way. She let her daughter make the decision of whether or not she wanted to finish school or continue with her education, but she also told her the cautionary tale of her own struggle without an education:

...And I always told her, “no drugs, no drinking, finish school...you don't have to if you don't have to...I didn't go, so I can't obligate you for something I didn't go myself, but this is for your benefit. You've seen my struggle, so now is your time to do, to do good.” Basically that's what I told them, but again, she, everything they've done it's been on their own, I haven't really had to put the whip on them (laughs) (Interview 4, lines 87-93)

#### Direct and Indirect Academic Support

Señora Blanca and Señor Federico both shared wanting to assist their children with homework when they were young, but they were unable to provide this type of support due to factors beyond their control. In her desire to teach and help her daughter with homework, Señora Blanca talked to a teacher at her daughter's school to see if her daughter could be taught in Spanish:

...look, when she started the third or fourth grade, I went to her teacher and I told him “Teacher I want (my daughter) to study her subjects in Spanish, so I can teach her...so I can”...He told me, “I'm sorry Mrs., but you cannot ruin your daughter's English, if I put her in Spanish classes that would ruin her English.”

*....vea, cuando empezó como el tercer, cuarto grado, fui a donde los profesor y les dije, “profesor yo quiero que (mi hija) estudie las materias en Español, pa yo poderle enseñar...pa yo poderle”... Me dijo, “que pena señora, pero usted no puede dañarle el inglés a esta niña y si la meto a clases de español se le daña el inglés.”* (Interview 2, lines 102-106)

Señora Blanca further explained that she still found ways to support her daughter academically. When she could not help her daughter with her homework due to the language barrier, they would go together to a friend's house or someone who knew the subject who could best help her daughter.

Señor Federico helped his daughter with homework until the third grade, but was not able to help her after that because the material got harder. As in Señora Blanca's case, an acquaintance was identified who could help Señor Federico's daughter with homework, which he was happy about.

Although Señora Ana did not talk specifically about helping her daughter with school or homework, she did discuss exposing her daughter to museums and culture, which can inspire academic curiosity. She shared:

...I always guided her with love. And I would take her to many places, like museums, she always remembers that. Before we came from Colombia we explored all the museums and I would always expose her to culture. I believe that is a way of guiding her and orienting her towards a good path and of educating her.

*...Siempre la guiaba con amor. Y la llevaba a muchos lados, digamos museos, ella siempre tiene eso en la cabeza. Antes de venirnos de Colombia nosotros recorrimos todos los museos y yo le mostraba siempre como la cultura. Yo creo que eso es una manera de guiarla y de orientarla por buen lado y de educarla.*

(Interview 1, lines 114-118)

Once their daughters were in college and graduate school, Señora Ana, Señora Blanca, and Señora Celeste served as academic confidants and supporters. Señora Ana's daughter would tell her how her day was going and what academic work she had pending; Señora Ana would then provide her with verbal encouragement and support. She noted: "...So I would call her and she would say 'Mom, I have this test, I have that,' I knew everything and I would give her encouragement 'You are going to do well, everything is going to be ok, you can do it and when you leave call me to tell me how it went'..." / "...Entonces yo la llamaba y me decía 'mami, tengo este examen, tengo aquello' todo yo lo sabía y la ayudaba más con el ánimo. Porque yo sabía por dónde ella iba, entonces siempre el ánimo 'te va a ir bien, todo te va a salir bien, tú puedes y cuando salgas me llamas a decirme cómo te fue'..." (Interview 1, lines 131-134).

Señora Blanca, for her part, shared that she was very involved in her daughter's college education. She explained, "She would come home and tell me 'Mom look at this, I have to do this' and she would tell me and would plan" / "Ella llegaba a la casa y me contaba 'mami vea esto, tengo que hacer eso' y me mostraba y me planeaba" (Interview 2, lines 114-115).

Señora Celeste mentioned that she always showed interest in her daughter's academics. She shared,

Every time she came back from the university, always...I would always ask her how her day was at school, what was it that she learned today, and, did she have a lot of homework to do today? 'What do you have to do?' ...How her education is going, whether there, whether there is something I can help with...I have always

been involved in her education, constantly, all the time.

*Siempre que ella llegaba de la universidad, toda la vida... siempre le preguntaba, ¿Cómo le fue en la escuela, qué fue hoy lo que aprendió, esto, tiene mucho homework que hacer en el día de hoy, qué es lo que tiene que hacer?...cómo va en la educación ella, qué hay, si hay algo que le pueda ayudar. Siempre he estado en la educación de ella, constantemente, todo el tiempo. (Interview 3, lines 120-126)*

#### Educación (Good Manners and Moral Values)

Señora Ana, Señor Federico, and Señora Gabriela discussed education and guidance beyond the academic realm, to encompass the concept of *educación*. Señora Ana told of teaching her daughter how to comport herself:

...manners... “Greet people, say goodbye to people, mom is busy, this is mom’s time.” So, always with love ...and I never told her “you made me look bad when we were there” because more than rules these are habits that we have taught them, habits about how to act in society, so it wasn’t too difficult.

*...de los modales... “Salude, despídase, la mamá está ocupada, este es el tiempo de la mamá.” Entonces, siempre con amor...y nunca yo le dije ‘o me hizo quedar mal en este lado’ porque siempre más que reglas son hábitos, que le hemos enseñado a ellas, hábitos de cómo deben comportarse en la sociedad entonces no fue muy difícil. (Interview 1, lines 118-121)*



Señor Federico also shared teaching her daughter so that she would be able to comport herself in society:

Look, the reality is that we gave her a foundation for when she left the house that she could defend herself ...if being with us there are things that we don't like, outside it is worse. But she left with certain, ah, things that are from our culture...and I think that has helped her a lot...

*Mire, la verdad pensamos que le dimos una formación para cuando ella estuviera afuera de la casa se aprendiera a defender porque es imposible que, no está, si estando con uno hay unas cosas que uno no le gustan, estando afuera pues es peor. Pero ella ya iba con ciertas, ah, cosas que son culturales de nosotros...y yo creo que le ha servido de mucho...* (Interview 5, lines 85-88)

Finally, Señora Gabriela talked about guiding her daughter by communicating with her and through role modeling so that her daughter would follow the correct path:

I would talk to her and through my actions, being an example for her...when they are small they are a sponge, they absorb everything. So we need the sponge to be filled with clean water so that when it is wrung out it leaves clean water. So yes, I try to be an example.

*Hablaba con ella y en mis actos - ser el ejemplo de ella.... cuando están pequeños son una esponja, todo lo absorben, entonces uno necesita que esa esponja se llene de agua limpia para que cuando la exprima deje agua limpia. Entonces, sí, trataba y trato de ser un ejemplo.* (Interview 6, lines 65-68)

## General Welfare and Protection

The PDT parenting characteristics of general welfare and protection encapsulate parents' meeting their children's basic needs and seeking to protect them from harm (Mowder, 2005). All the participants indicated that they met their children's basic needs within their means and abilities. They also shared that they sought to protect their daughters by being with them, having rules, and teaching them to protect themselves when they left home.

### General Welfare

All the participants shared that, according to their means, they met their daughters' necessities when they were children and adolescents. Señora Blanca noted "She didn't lack for anything; I always gave her everything she asked for, but with much work and much effort" / "*Nunca le faltó nada, siempre le di todo lo que pidió, pero con mucho trabajo y mucho esfuerzo*" (Interview 2, line 129). The other parents echoed that response, indicating that their children had all the necessities growing up. When asked how she provided for her daughter, Señora Gabriela shared:

Everything possible because I know that she didn't ask to come into the world, that she was my responsibility. So my husband has always worked very hard, so have I, and we have given her everything that we could, letting her know that we couldn't provide her things that were not in our reach, that there are limits, that there are measures and...but giving her the best of us. The best that we have been able to.

*Todo lo posible porque sé que ella no había pedido venir al mundo, que ella era mi responsabilidad. Entonces mi esposo siempre ha trabajado muy duro, yo también, y le hemos dado todo lo que está a nuestro alcance, haciéndole saber que no podemos dar lo que no está a nuestro alcance, que hay límites, hay medidas, y... pero dándole lo mejor de nosotros. Lo mejor que hemos podido.*

(Interview 6, lines 78-82)

Señor Federico smiled as he talked about providing for his daughter's necessities when she was a child. It visibly filled him with joy to discuss financially providing for his daughter. He reminisced, "Ah...one of the things that was so beautiful, because she was our only one, if I saw a dress when I was out, I would grab it and I would buy it, I would give it to her and she would wear it immediately"/"Ah...*una de las cosas que fue bonita, como era la única que teníamos eh...si yo miraba un vestido en la calle, yo lo cogía y lo compraba y se lo daba y se lo ponía inmediatamente (risas)...*" (Interview 5, lines 95-96). He continued "...and the same with clothes or shoes, I knew, 'papi, look, my tennis shoes are hurting me', and I knew what it was...(laughs)...and we had a good time, I enjoyed my daughter; she has been a blessing to us"/"...*y lo mismo con la ropa o zapatos, yo ya sabía, 'papi, mire que me está molestando los tenis', yo sabía lo que era...(ríe)...y la pasamos bien, yo disfruté a mi hija, ha sido una bendición para nosotros*" (Interview 5, lines 100-102).

Señora Ana discussed meeting other needs for her daughter because her husband was the one who financially provided for the family. She specifically mentioned making home cooked meals for her children, nourishing them. She shared,

My husband has been the one that has provided, I would say 100% of the necessities, because I left everything aside when my daughter was born. My function has been that they have hot food. She does not have a memory of having come from school and to say that her mom hadn't...or she took me to a McDonald's...no, they always had hot food when they would come from school. My husband provided, but I wouldn't let the food go bad. Before she left breakfast and dinner at night. I have always been there.

*Mi esposo ha sido el que proveyó, yo digo el 100% de las necesidades, porque yo deje todo a un lado cuando (mi hija) nació. Mi función ha sido que ellas tengan una comida caliente. Ella nunca recuerda haber venido de la escuela y que decir que mi mamá no...O me llevo a McDonald's a algo...no, siempre tenían una comida caliente cuando ella llegaba de la escuela. Que mi esposo proveía pero yo no dejaba dañar la comida. Antes de irse el desayuno y la comida por la noche. Siempre he estado ahí. (Interview 1, lines 146-154)*

Similarly, Señora Blanca also expressed the importance of having home cooked meals for her daughter and meeting that basic need for nourishment. She explained, “Oh no, food, I would wake up, before going to work, and I would leave her the food ready...I would make her soup, well...everything that we Colombians eat.”/ “*Ah, no la comida, yo me levantaba, antes de irme pa el trabajo, yo le dejaba la comida lista...Y hacia su sopa, o le hacía, pues...todo lo que comemos los Colombianos*” (Interview 2, lines 148-149).

Once their children became older and went to college, Señora Celeste and Señora Blanca discussed the central role financial aid and scholarship money had on helping

their children provide for their own necessities. Señora Celeste noted that because of her family's low income, federal aid provided for her daughter's expenses during the four years of college. Señora Blanca shared, "When she started college she applied for scholarships...and she won scholarships for being a good student and...and because, honestly, because of the little money I made"/"Cuando ella entró a la universidad ella aplicó para unas becas...y se y se gano las becas por buena estudiante y ... y porque sinceramente, por lo poquito que yo ganaba" (Interview 2, lines 132-133).

Throughout the interviews, parents highlighted that their children had received fellowships that covered their graduate education and expenses, which gave peace of mind to these parents who did not have the financial means to help their children finance graduate school. Señora Blanca, for example, discussed not having to worry about her daughter's graduate expenses because her daughter "is on scholarship and has the most prestigious scholarship in the entire United States"/"está becada y tiene la beca más prestigiosa de los estados unidos" (Interview 2, Line 215) the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.

### Protection

In regard to how the participants protected their daughters when they were children and adolescents, parents shared various ways they found to keep them safe. Given that their children were female, gender norms within the Latino/a culture likely influenced the way in which parents expressed protection. Asked how she provided protection to her daughter when she was a child, Ana replied "Yes, being with her all the

time”/“*sí, estando con ella todo el tiempo*” (Interview 1, Line 178). Federico mentioned that he and his wife were a bit overprotective and were always aware of where their daughter was. He responded,

We were always very careful. For example, those types of things that here are very cultural, like pajama parties, sleeping in another house where she didn't know the parents of her friends...we never let her go. We were parents a bit overprotective and sometimes we had to do it because (my wife) didn't work until our daughter went to school when she was in kindergarten; we went to drop her off and pick her up from school. Even in college, we drove her until I bought her a car. So she never traveled alone. She was never in the streets where we didn't know where she was. Yes, it was a bit hard on her, but at the end it was good for her.

*Siempre fuimos muy cuidadosos. Por ejemplo ese tipo de cosas aquí muy culturales por ejemplo el pijama party, era dormir a otra casa donde ella no conocía padres de sus amigas...nunca la dejamos ir. Fuimos padres un poquito sobreprotectores y teníamos hay veces de hacerlo porque (mi esposa) no trabajó, hasta que ella fue a la escuela que pasó el kinder, la íbamos a traer y la íbamos a dejar en la escuela. Incluso al college. La íbamos a dejar hasta que compre un carro. Entonces ya ella viajó sola. Nunca estuvo en la calle donde nosotros no supiéramos donde estaba. Sí...es un poquito duro para ella, pero al final es bueno para ella. (Interview 5, lines 118-124)*

Like Señor Federico, Señora Gabriela also shared that she was overprotective when her daughter was growing up and through her graduate school years. She stated,

I'm an overprotective mom (laughs)...that is my problem. I am overprotective. I come from a family of overprotective mothers, my mom, my sister. In the way that we always support but I'm always asking her questions...like, "did you eat breakfast? What did you eat? Did you have lunch? What did you have for lunch?" things that she knows by now. Ah, checking the weather "ah, it's going to rain, don't forget to take an umbrella, raincoat...be careful in (city) because the stairs there – I lived there – are slippery, put on your boots", yes, I'm an overprotective mom; I know it, very much (laughs).

*Yo soy una madre sobreprotectora (risa)...ese es mi problema. Yo soy sobreprotectora. Vengo de una familia de madres sobreprotectoras, mi mamá, mi hermana. O sea en el sentido en que sí apoyamos pero siempre estoy preguntándole como: "¿desayunaste? ¿que comiste? ¿almorzaste? ¿Qué almorzaste?" cosas que ya (risa) debe saber. ahh, me, chequeando el weather, "ah, va a llover, Recuérdate de llevarte la sombrilla raincoat...eh ten cuidado en (ciudad) porque las escaleras yo vivía allá... resbalan, ponte las botas", si, soy una madre sobreprotectora, yo lo reconozco, demasiado (risa). (Interview 6, lines 91-97)*

Señora Elsa, who seemed more relaxed than the other parents in this area, said that she would just ask her daughter to call her in case of emergency or if she skipped school to let her know, so that she knew where she was. She said, "I would always let

them know to communicate with me whatever, good or bad. I wasn't, you know, happy with the bad, but at least I would know what they're up to..." (Interview 4, lines 107-113).

A common concern shared by parents once their daughters were older was their worry about the dangers their children could face in the outside world. They discussed talking with their daughters and alerting them of these dangers so they would be prepared to handle this new stage. Señora Ana explained,

She was raised where nothing happens, where she can walk with her friends who are good kids...but she was going to move to (college town) and I told her that she needed to learn to have malice, to distrust people around her, to look behind her...and the rule that I gave her, that as soon as she left class she had to call me or my husband, and we would talk to her until she reached her car. She would turn on the car, and as soon as she would turn on the car I told her to call us when she got out of the car until she got to her apartment. She always followed those rules (laughs). That was how we protected her in the distance.

*Ella se crió acá donde no pasa nada, donde van caminando los amigos sanos ...pero ya iba a (ciudad de la universidad) y le dije que aprendiera a tener malicia, a desconfiar de la gente del alrededor, a mirar para atrás ... Y la regla que le di es que apenas saliera de clase ella me tenía que llamar o a mi esposo, y nos íbamos hablando hasta que ella llegara al carro, prendía al carro, y apenas prendía al carro que nos llamara ya cuando se bajara del carro y llegara al*



*apartamento. Ella siempre cumplió esas reglas (risas). Esa fue la manera que quisimos protegerla a distancia. (Interview 1, lines 183-190)*

Señora Blanca similarly talked to her daughter about what she would encounter.

She cautioned her as follows:

I would tell her about the dangers of the streets. For example, in high school I would tell her “(daughter) everyone is not a good person, watch who you make friendships with, don’t discriminate against them, but you don’t have to hang out with them.” And she would listen to everything I said. Thankfully nothing ever happened to my child.

*...yo le decía a ella los peligros que habían en la calle. Por ejemplo en la high school le decía ‘(hija) todas las personas no son buenas’, fíjese con quien se relaciona, no los discrimine, pero si sáqueles el cuerpo, y ella todo eso me lo me lo me lo acataba, y gracias a Dios pues nunca le pasó nada a la niña. (Interview 2, lines 159-162)*

### Responsivity

The concept of responsivity, according to Mowder (2005), describes the extent to which parents respond to the needs of their children. Overall, the majority of the participants shared that if they felt that their daughters needed anything they would do the best to provide for them. Parents in this study made clear that they sought to meet their children’s needs when they believed it necessary. Most of the parents specifically answered this question in terms of financial support.

Señora Ana said that although her daughter could pay for most of her basic necessities by the time she left home, she and her husband would still deposit money into her account to help her cover other costs: “Yes, like I told you, she could cover her rent, her bills, but so that she wouldn’t end up without food to cover something, we made a plan to deposit money into her account weekly”/ *“Sí, como le comenté, que ella podía pagar su renta, sus biles, pero de pronto no quedara sin comida por pagar algo, de esa manera hicimos un plan con mi esposo de depositarle semanal...sí, el poquito extra que le dábamos”* (Interview 1, lines 197-199). Señor Federico also went above and beyond to ensure his daughter had everything she needed financially and also sent her money every month once she left home to help her. He posited “When she needed other money, she only needed to call us; I had her card and...quickly I went to deposit money for her”/ *“Cuando necesitaba otro dinero sólo nos llamaba, yo tenía la tarjeta de ella y...rapidito iba a depositarle dinero a ella”* (Interview 5, lines 107-108).

Señora Blanca also said that she would do everything possible to help her daughter if she was in need. She elaborated, “When she, for example, tells me she needs something, oh, I do everything possible, Natalia, better said...I will pawn whatever it is but I will meet her necessity” *“cuando ella por ejemplo me dice que necesita algo, o yo hago todo lo posible Natalia, mejor dicho...empeño lo que sea pero yo le surco la necesidad a la niña”* (Interview 2, lines 213-214).

Similarly, Señora Elsa described that it was difficult for her financially, but if her daughter needed anything, she would be there for her:

Right, but at the end of the day, if she does need anything I am there to provide it...I look for the means, matters to provide it for her. I've always told her "you know you could count on me, I don't make much, I'm struggling myself, but with the little bit I got you could count on me, I don't ever want you to go hungry because you don't have five dollars to go buy lunch." She could always count on me, I always tell her, and she does, whenever she needs mom, that's what mom is for... (Interview 4, lines 127-131)

Señora Gabriela spoke about wanting to be responsive to her daughter's financial needs, but finding it difficult because her daughter does not tell her when she needs something, as to not be a burden. Thus, she explained, she had to find ways to be responsive to these needs: "...I have to do it in a very covert way, I have to do it very intelligently, meaning, buying what she likes, spontaneously, very carefully"/ "...*Tengo que hacerlo de una manera bien sutil, o sea tengo que hacerlo bien inteligentemente, o sea, comprando lo que le gusta, este, espontáneamente, o sea, con mucha cautela (risa)*" (Interview 6, lines 106-112).

### Sensitivity

Sensitivity was defined by Mowder (2005) as parents accurately perceiving what their child is trying to convey and addressing that need by "respecting, understanding, comforting and responding" (p. 52) to their child's need. All the parents believed they were sensitive to their child's needs. Five of the parents (Señora Ana, Señora Blanca, Señora Elsa, Señor Federico, and Señora Gabriela) specifically discussed "knowing" that

something was happening with their child through tone of voice, facial expression, or simply a feeling. Señora Celeste and Señor David discussed being constantly aware of what was happening with their daughter through communication with her.

Señora Ana, Señora Elsa, Señor Federico, and Señora Gabriela shared knowing how their daughters were feeling by their tones of voice. Señora Ana mentioned, “I have felt it even in the distance, I know when she is down, when she is sensitive. She calls me and she tells me ‘Hi mom, I’m fine’ but I know, I know her”/ “*Yo he sentido hasta en la distancia, que está un mar de por medio, yo sé cuando ella está ‘down’, cuando está sensible. Así ella me llame y me diga ‘hola mamá, yo estoy bien’ yo sé, yo la conozco*” (Interview 1, lines 221-213).

Señora Gabriella also said that she could tell how her daughter was feeling by her voice, face, and walk. She shared,

Yes, yes, as a mother I can tell by her voice, when it changes, she’s my daughter!

I noticed by her face. If she had a stressful day, I can tell in her face. I can guess it in her...even in the way she walks. As a mother I can feel it, yes.

*Sí, sí, este, como madre puedo notar su tono de voz, cuando cambia, es mi hija!  
Este puedo notar en su rostro. Sí, sé cuándo ha tenido un día estresado, lo puedo oler en su rostro. Lo puedo adivinar en su ca..., hasta en el caminar. Sí como madre sí lo presiento, sí.* (Interview 6, lines 117-119)

Parents also described unique connections that enabled them to know when their daughters were having a difficult time, even before seeing or talking with their child

Señora Elsa described this connection,

Every time I have her on my mind, sometimes, the phone rings and I go “I was just going to call you, I had the phone on my hand. I was going to call you.” Or vice-versa, she tells me the same she goes, “Mom, I was just going to call you.” I go, “We have that little bit of telepathy in there.” So yeah, we have that.

(Interview 4, lines 141-144)

Señora Blanca similarly mentioned that she and her daughter were so connected that she could feel when something is happening, even before speaking.

Natalia, I think that mothers are connected with their daughters, one knows when a daughter has a problem...because there are times at night when I’m desperate, “what is going on with this girl”. And the next day she calls me and tells me, mami this happened with this professor or this professor. And I tell her “I could feel it, tell me what happened” and then she tells me.

*Natalia yo creo que las madres no compenentramos con las hijas, uno sabe cómo cuando la hija está en algún problema...porque yo hay veces que en la noche estoy desesperada, “que pasa que pasa con esta muchacha”. Y al otro día me llama y me dice mami me ocurrió esto y esto con la profesora fulana, o con el profesor fulano. Y yo ahí, (hija) “yo lo presentía, ¿cuénteme qué le pasó?”*

*Entonces ya me cuenta ella...* (Interview 2, lines 226-230)

Señora Ana and Señora Gabriela discussed seeking to address their daughters’ needs when they feel that there is something wrong. They shared wanting to reach out to their daughters, but at the same time being sensitive to their daughter’s desire for privacy and independence. Señora Gabriela reported forcing herself to be patient in order to

respect her daughter, even though her first instinct was to find out immediately what was wrong:

Well, I'm learning, (laughs) because being a protector I want to find out immediately what is happening to be able to help her. And that problem I have with her sisters, not only her, it is exactly the same. I want to find out, that she tells me quickly in case that that...if her head hurts I have to give her a Tylenol. Better said, but the way that I deal with it now is giving her time, telling her that I am here when she wants to talk. So, then, I give her a bit of time until she comes and approaches me so we can talk. Yes, I try to be patient, which I am not...I am very impatient as a mother

*Pues, estoy aprendiendo, (risa) porque al ser protectora quiero averiguar de una vez qué es lo que está pasando para poderla ayudar, y ese problema lo tengo con las hermanas, no ella solamente, es exactamente igual. Quiero averiguar que me diga rápido por si tengo que, que... si le duele la cabeza si tengo que darle un Tylenol. O sea, pero la forma que lo manejo ahora es tratando de darle tiempo, diciendo estoy aquí para cuando quiera hablar. Entonces, pues este, le doy un tiempcito hasta que venga y se acerque para que podamos hablar. Sí trato de tener paciencia, que no la tengo...soy muy impaciente como madre. (Interview 6, lines 121-127)*

Señora Ana noted that she has learned through the years to simply listen and give her daughter space, that eventually her daughter will open up to her and she will be able to provide her support or guidance:

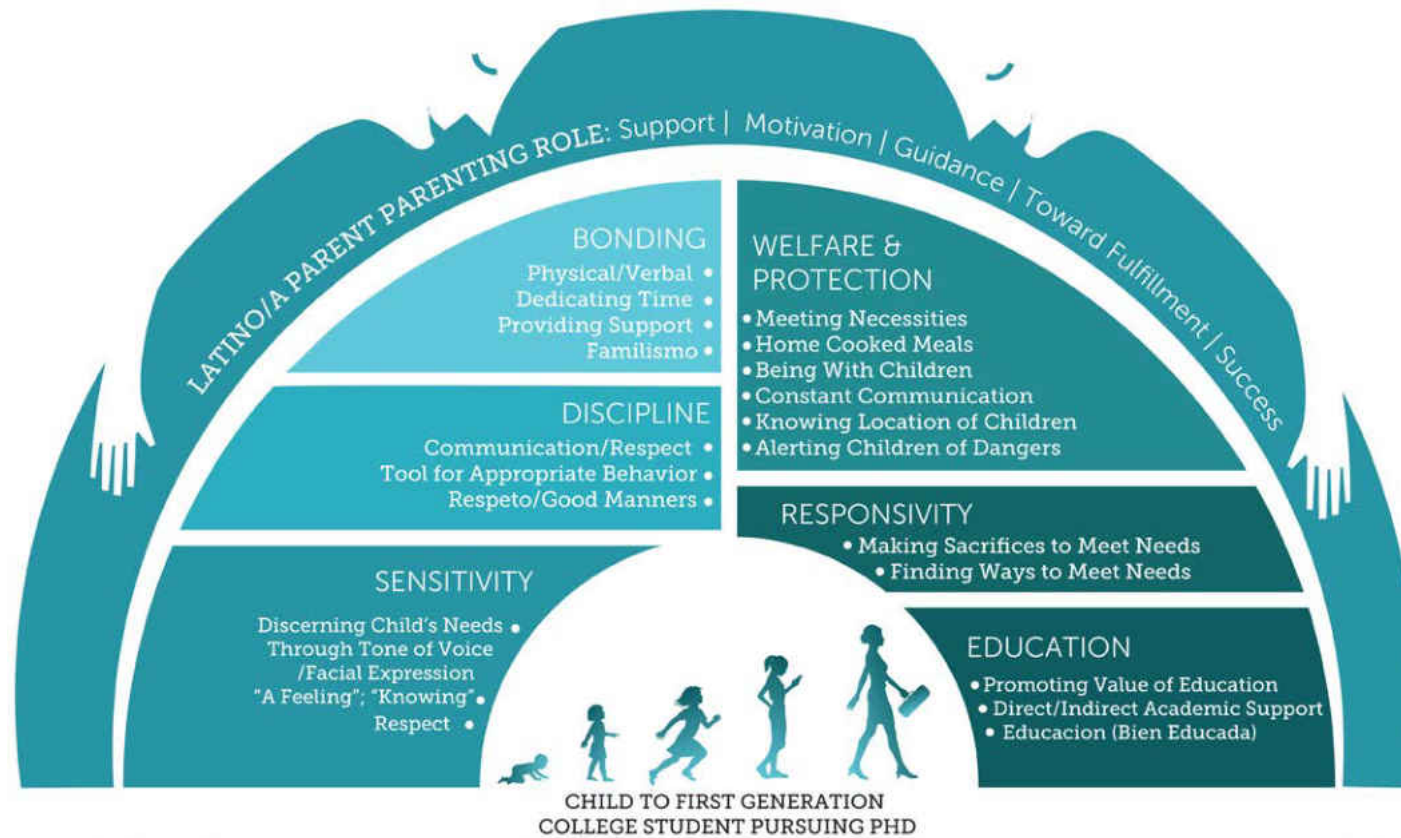
Yes, I feel it, and I think that sensitivity comes from the connection that we both have. I have felt it. And so I always listen to her. I don't tell her "what's wrong my love?" because I did that a lot, like in high school, and there came a time when she told me "stop mom, please wait until I talk about it." So I felt like wow. But I now give her space so that she tells me. I no longer ask her in this stage of life "tell me" but instead I stay quiet so that she tells me. But I feel it...

*Sí, yo lo siento, yo pienso que esa sensibilidad es la conexión que tenemos las dos. Yo lo he sentido. Y entonces yo siempre la escucho a ella. Yo no le digo "¿qué tienes mi amor?" porque yo estaba haciendo mucho eso, como en high school, y ella llegó a una etapa de su vida que ella dijo "ya mami, ya déjame que yo lo hable". Entonces para mí fue como wow, pero yo ya le doy el espacio que ella me cuente. Ya no le estoy diciendo a ella en esta etapa de la vida "cuéntame" si no que me quedo callada para que ella me cuente. Pero yo lo siento...*

(Interview 1, lines 217-222)

### Synthesis: Bringing Theory and Voices Together

As shown in Figure 4, the ways in which participants demonstrated each parenting characteristic promoted the parenting role they felt was most important: supporting, guiding and motivating their children to achieve fulfillment and success. Parents demonstrated bonding through physical and verbal expressions of love, and by dedicating time to their children, actions which provide a lifelong sense of value and connection. They provided discipline through communication and respect, while using



*Note.* This illustration is an interpretation of the concepts posited in “Parent Development Theory: Understanding Parents, Parenting Perceptions, and Parenting Behaviors,” by B. A. Mowder, 2005, *Journal of Early Childhood and Infant Psychology*.

*Figure 4.* Latino/a Parent Perceived Parenting Role and Expression of Parenting Characteristics as Child Progresses to First-Generation College Student Pursuing a PhD. Adaptation of Parent Development Theory.

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discipline as a vehicle to teach their children appropriate behavior, lessons which would impact them beyond their formative years. They guided their children to value education, provided direct and indirect academic support, and promoted a holistic view of education beyond academics. Parents ensured their children's general welfare and protection, thus, making it possible for them to be healthy and safe to pursue their dreams. They were responsive to their children's needs and sacrificed in order to ensure their children could thrive. Finally, they were sensitive and aware of their children's feelings and sought ways to address these feelings to help their children overcome difficulties they may face in their journey.

### Summary

The three research questions posed in this study were examined in depth in this chapter. First, based on the textural and structural descriptions examined in Chapter 5, the essence of the experience of Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing a doctorate degree was distilled. Next, the impact that the journey to the PhD had on parents and families was discussed. Finally, participants' perceptions of their parenting role and expression of parenting characteristics (Mowder, 2005) were examined.

CHAPTER 7  
MAJOR FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS:  
CONSEJOS AND GUIDANCE

Introduction

The central purpose of this study was to give a voice to a population that has been largely invisible in higher education literature, Latino/a parents of first-generation college students pursuing a PhD. Six interviews with seven participants were conducted which elucidated six major themes and two minor themes as to their experience; these themes, in turn, captured the essence of the journey. Parents perceived that their child's educational journey had a significant impact on other family members. Moreover, parents identified their parenting role as one of motivating, guiding, and supporting their children, and described the ways in which they expressed parenting characteristics (bonding, discipline, education, welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity) as a means to fulfill that parenting role. In this chapter, I highlight major findings, discuss recommendations for various constituents, outline study limitations, and provide recommendations for future research.

Major Findings

Although researchers have observed that Latino/a students at the undergraduate and graduate level view their parents as key sources of motivation and support, the findings of the present study provided insight as to parents' intentionality in undertaking that role, in their own voice. Though none of the participants had college degrees, they viewed themselves as sources of motivation, guidance, and support for their children.

They believed their primary role as parents was to support in any way they could their child's aspirations.

Echoing the literature, parents did not mention direct or active involvement with the educational system. However, they were very involved in their children's education in other ways. They inculcated in their children the importance of education; provided them resources and academic support within their means as their children navigated the educational pipeline; made sure that their children were "well educated" (*bien educados*) promoting in that way their personal and academic endeavors; engaged with their children's learning; supported and facilitated their children's academic aspirations; and, despite personal emotions or apprehensions, respected and encouraged their children's decisions to pursue an educational path they did not understand and that would take them physically away from them.

Although it was discussed in the literature on Latino/a students that these students may be burdened by family expectations or feel guilty for not being able to meet them, findings in the present study provided insight as to parent perspectives in regard to familial expectations. Parents' perceptions of their regular interactions with their children were rooted in the view that these interactions were positive reflections of their closeness to their children. These interactions met an emotional and psychological need for the parents. They provided parents with a sense of emotional connection; allowed them to feel that they were still sources of guidance, support, and protection in the distance; and solidified their value of familism.

This study highlighted the challenging and confusing nature of the parental experience as children leave to pursue their academic endeavors. The participants in this study took great pride and could see the reverberating impact of their children's accomplishments on their family; at the same time, they struggled to come to grips with the reality that their children would no longer be physically present in their everyday lives and that this was a long-term proposition. These parents, who largely performed low-skilled jobs, dedicated themselves fully to their children. Their children (their life's purpose) leaving them created high levels of sadness, longing, concern, worry, and anxiety for their parents who attempted to fill that gap by engaging in new ways to interact with their children as often as possible or as often as permitted by their children.

### Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this study. First, this study was limited to the experiences of the seven study participants. These participants identified as Latino/a, did not have a college degree, and were parents of daughters pursuing a PhD. All of the participants' children had been part of a McNair Scholars Program at a research institution and had identified at the time as first-generation and low-income. Themes and answers to research questions were examined based on the particular narratives of these participants. Although these findings provided a picture of this population of parents, these findings are not generalizable beyond the scope of these specific participants.

The study was additionally limited by the fact that all participants' children were women. The gender of the child may influence various factors that were highlighted in

this study including, but not limited to, nature of interactions and concerns for physical protection.

In regard to the participants themselves, five of the seven parents were women. Thus, the study may be affected by gender imbalances within the participants. Moreover, because this study focused on the parents and not the graduate students' perceptions of parental support, I cannot venture to assert any conclusions as to why a parent of a specific gender was selected by the child to participate and whether these selections support the literature which proposed that mothers tend to be the emotional supporters of their children as they navigate the educational pipeline.

Additionally, this study was limited in that it unilaterally provided a voice to the parents. Although unilateral by design, as it intended to listen to the parent voice without juxtaposing it with a competing voice that could provide validation or repudiation to their perspectives, this one sidedness also led to questions. This study was intended to provide the parent perspective, not to reconcile literature on students with this perspective.

### Implications and Recommendations

This section contains two sets of implications and recommendations. The first are focused on the specific findings of this study based on the data presented. The second are general recommendations based on my own professional experience and literature.

## Evidence-based Implications and Recommendations

### High Achieving Latino/a Students

This study provided unique and unprecedented insight regarding the parental experience, which may be helpful for high achieving first-generation Latino/a students who may be considering pursuing a PhD or who are in the process of attaining one. Although some students may already have an understanding of their parents' experiences based on their own interactions, this study elucidates some common themes among Latino/a parents, which could resonate with their own experience, providing them with validation and a sense of shared understanding. Further, given that this study highlighted parents' voices, it may also provide unique insight as to parent sentiments and motivations that may not be clear from everyday interactions.

As found in this study, some parents fitting the demographic of the participants may privately harbor uncertainties, fears, and worries in regards to the PhD journey or to the health and well-being of their children. Though students may not know this, as parents may intentionally keep these personal feelings from their children, knowing that this could be a factor in their parents' experience could lead students to enhance communication with their parents in order to address some of these concerns. This may not only ameliorate parents' worries and create new lines of communication, but it could also potentially provide enhanced levels of support from parent to child rooted in common understanding.

### Higher Education Practitioners

This study provides insight on the parent experience for higher education practitioners working with high achieving Latino/a students who wish to pursue or are pursuing graduate education. Highlighted were the fears and anxieties that parents have in regard to various aspects of their children's academic journeys including: lack of knowledge of the PhD and what it entails, concerns about distance and difficulty assimilating that their child may move away for graduate school, and concerns for their children's wellbeing and safety. Given the close relationship between Latino/a parents and their children and the important role that Latino/a parents play in providing emotional support for their children, it would be beneficial to both parents and students to develop ways to help parents understand the doctoral process so they can better assimilate their children's journeys. The following are recommendations for interventions:

- Develop curricula within courses or co-curricular initiatives that encourage students to reflect on the role of their parents (or in absence, legal guardians/other support systems), and identify areas where they may not understand the higher education journey. Challenge students to develop ways to communicate about these knowledge gaps.
- Create outreach resources for parents such as bilingual on-line and paper newsletters not only with information about students' achievements, but also with information on how they can support their children, and that explain the

PhD journey and its implications (e.g. the importance of going to institutions where there is funding and appropriate mentorship, even if far from home).

- Develop intentional programs for parents to meet with support personnel who work directly with their children (e.g. orientation or family events). These events will connect parents with individuals within the university who are providing academic support and emotional encouragement to their children. This could potentially provide the parents with a sense of comfort.

### General Suggestions and Recommendations

#### Institutions

Given the significant role that parents play in the academic journey of high achieving Latino/a students, it is important for institutions that seek to promote Latino/a student recruitment, retention, and success at the undergraduate and graduate level, to consider Latino/a parents as key stakeholders. Based on the stories shared by parents in this study, the interactions that parents have with the university have a strong impact on them and make them feel part of the experience. In turn, as has been shown in a variety of studies, parents can serve as key support systems, encouraging their children to overcome challenges and continue on their chosen academic path. The following recommendations for institutions are based on the literature, this study's findings, and my own experience as a practitioner:



- Develop inclusive, safe, and educational programming that is intentionally welcoming for Latino/a parents of first-generation college students. This encompasses providing appropriate services (such as bilingual and culturally appropriate events/workshops; available funding for transportation or housing if needed) that facilitate their interactions.
- Provide strong institutional support for grant-funded programs such as the McNair Scholars Program, which serves first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students to pursue a PhD. These programs provide needed guidance and resources for students who want to attend graduate school that parents cannot provide; they complement the emotional, financial, and other types of support provided by parents. Part of the institution's commitment must include finding ways to institutionalize these types of programs in case grant funding is no longer available. Institutions that do not have a McNair Scholars or similar program are encouraged to seek grant funds to implement one or to fund an institutionally based program.
- Developing programs at the graduate level, if they do not already exist, that provide support to first-generation, underrepresented students in graduate education, and ensuring that these programs not only appropriately support and serve students, but also that they create mechanisms by which they provide information and resources to parents.

### Recommendations for Future Research

There are several recommendations suggested for future research:

- My study consisted largely of female participants. A more balanced representation of male and female participants in future research studies could provide additional insight not only as to the parent experience, but also as to whether there are similarities or differences in the ways that mothers and fathers relate to their children in their educational journeys. This inquiry is important, as researchers have identified mothers as being the main providers of emotional support for graduate students (Gándara, 1994; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006); however, in my study, I could not verify these findings. Thus, further investigation in this area could provide additional clarity as to the types and levels of support that mothers and fathers provide their children as they navigate the higher education pipeline.
- My study's limitation that all the participant's children were women invites future research that ensures that both male and female children are represented. This new avenue would provide insight on whether parenting roles, expectations, or experiences change based on gender.
- Another recommendation for future researchers is to undertake a quantitative study assessing the various factors related to this population's parental experiences as highlighted in this study. Factors that could be assessed include parent/child communication levels, understanding the PhD journey, support for the child's decision to pursue a PhD, level of difficulty with

child's departure from home, worry for child's emotional well-being, among others. Given the relatively low percentage of Latino/a first-generation college students who pursue PhDs, there could be significant challenges in identifying, attaining contact information for, reaching out to, and attaining a large enough sample of the parents of these students. However, this type of study would offer important, generalizable information, providing greater insight into the parental experience.

- Given that the parents' voices present a one-sided perspective, I would recommend that future qualitative studies explore the children's point of view in regard to the parental journey and its impact on the student. I recommend interviewing dyads, (i.e., parents and their children). This research could help elucidate the similarities and differences in parent and student perspectives.
- All of the children of the study participants had been part of a McNair Scholars Program located at a metropolitan public research university. Replicating this study with parents of doctoral degree seeking students (Latino or other ethnic/cultural backgrounds) who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) or Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) as undergraduates could provide important insight as to similarities or differences in experiences.
- Based on my study findings, I would recommend that future researchers explore the role of modern technology and how it affects the way in which parents and children communicate. The level of interconnectedness through

the use of current technology (cell phones, text, Skype) among participants and their children was very high. Though this could be rooted in cultural or other personal/family specific factors, it could also be attributed to the ease and availability of technology that made these constant exchanges possible.

- Conducting a future study focused on Latino/a parents who were born in the United States (vs. immigrants) could provide unique information as to the differences in regard to parent experience based on generation in the United States.
- My final recommendation is to initiate similar qualitative studies with other racial/ethnic populations of parents and with various levels of educational attainment. This study focused on Latino/a parents of first-generation college students, but I often wondered whether parents from other groups would provide similar answers. Undertaking these studies would provide a better understanding of whether some of these experiences have cultural roots, are based on educational level, and/or are universal parental experiences.

### Researcher's Reflection

Rooted in my personal and professional experiences, I undertook this research study with the certainty that the voices of these parents mattered and that hearing them would provide unique and powerful insight to researchers, practitioners, and students navigating this journey. My research was at times met with incredulity, as peers or others outside of the Latino community or other collectivistic cultures who inquired about my

research questioned its importance. They noted that the children of my intended participants were well into their adult years, past the stage where their parents would be significant players in their journey. Further, why did their experience matter? If I was going to study parents, should not the focus be on the student? Although this led me at times to question the significance of my own study, I intrinsically knew that these voices and experiences needed to be heard. As a first-generation Latino/a student pursuing a doctoral degree, I was eager to hear them and to understand in more depth what our parents, who sacrificed so much for us, go through and may keep from us. This study begins to elucidate this important and unheard narrative. It begins to paint a picture of many Latino/a parents as they undertake their own journey through the educational pipeline towards a PhD. They may not attend classes or write dissertations, and their names may not be written on the degree, but their contributions are undeniable.

## CLOSING VIGNETTE

Flor and her husband anxiously waited to board their flight to California. It was finally happening. After six grueling years, Elisa was finally graduating with her PhD. Flor reminisced about the highs and lows of the journey. She could not wait for Elisa to be able to stop studying and finally enjoy the fruits of her labor; it had been a long and stressful journey for both Flor and Elisa. Now, on her way to see her daughter graduate, she knew that it was worth it.

When Flor said goodbye to her daughter six years before, she did not anticipate how hard it would be to live without her. Although she talked to Elisa every day, she still missed her presence. The time difference was hard, but Flor started to go to bed later to make sure she spoke to her daughter before bed each night. She felt fortunate that she and her daughter were so close and that Elisa confided in her. She looked forward to hearing Elisa's voice every day and got excited to see her through Skype every once in a while. But it was also hard. Hearing about the challenges her daughter faced and sensing her stress was so hard for her. Yes, Flor was always positive and encouraging, making sure her daughter knew that she could handle the challenges; but after hanging up the phone or closing Skype she would be filled with anxiety. She would spend nights awake, wondering how her daughter was doing, knowing that even at times when Elisa said she was fine, she could tell by her voice that there was something very wrong. But she also knew her daughter was strong and that she would make it. And she did.

"Is Elisa taking care of herself? Is she eating properly?" Flor wondered as the plane landed. They had just recently talked through Skype, and she could tell that her face was looking thin. It was ok though. Elisa was moving back to Florida for an academic job only 45 minutes away from her parents. Flor would be able to take care of her again, making sure that on the weekends, when Elisa visited, she sent with her enough home cooked meals to last for the week. Flor was looking forward to graduation, of course; this was everything they had been working towards. She was overjoyed that her daughter would fulfill her dreams and finally do what she wanted. But she was most looking forward to having her daughter close again.

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Script to student in order to identify which parent to interview: Which parent do you think would feel most comfortable sharing their journey as a parent to you as well as their experience as you went to college/graduate school; or who would you prefer to speak to me?*

### Part I: Demographics

What is your age?

Where were you born?

What is your country of heritage?

If born outside of the mainland United States, when did you immigrate to the mainland United States?

What is the highest level of education you have completed? Where? When?

How many children do you have?

How old are they?

Have any of them attended college? Have any of them completed college?

What is your marital status?

What is your profession/work?

### Part II: Stems Related to Processes and Experiences

#### *Parent Development Theory (PDT) General Questions*

1. What is the role of a parent?
2. How would you describe your experience as a parent to your daughter?

#### *Bonding*

3. In his/her childhood and adolescence, how did you demonstrate to your daughter that you loved him/her or felt affection for him/her?
4. Did that change or stay the same as your child became a college student? What about now?

#### *Discipline*

5. How did you put limits and discipline your daughter, when she was a child and adolescent?
6. How did that change, if at all, as your child became a college student? What about now that she is in graduate school?

#### *Education*

7. In his/her childhood and adolescence, how did you educate and guide your child?
8. How did that change, if at all, as your child became a college student? What about now that she is in graduate school?



*Welfare and Protection*

9. How did you provide for the necessities of your child when she was a child/adolescent?
10. If you had the capacity to - how did you provide for the necessities of your child when she was in college? What about now?
11. In his/her childhood and adolescence, how did you protect or ensure the safety of your child?
12. How did that change when they were in college? What about now?

*Responsivity*

13. When you perceive that your child needs something (above and beyond basic necessities), how do you respond? Please provide some examples.

*Sensitivity*

14. In what ways do you feel that you are sensitive to what happens to your child? Please provide examples

*Parent Experience – Lived Experience*

15. Why do you think that your daughter decided to go to college?
16. What do you remember about that decision (story?)
17. Describe how you interacted with your son/daughter during college? (Tell me a story about an event that shows how you interacted with your son or daughter during college?)
18. As a parent, how did you experience his/her college journey? (How did you feel when they told you what they were doing in college?)
19. Tell me about when your son/daughter first told you they wanted to get their doctorate? What went through your head? How did you feel?
20. What have been the most joyful experiences you have had as your son/daughter has pursued a higher education? (If not addressed - what about graduate school?)
21. What have been your most challenging and difficult experiences as your son/daughter pursued a higher education? (If not addressed -what about graduate school?)
22. If your child moved away to go to college, how did you feel when your son/daughter told you they were going away for college? What challenge did the issue of distance represent for you?

23. If your child moved out of state for graduate school, how did you feel when your son/daughter told you they were going away for graduate school? What challenge did the issue of distance represent for you?
24. Are there things you have not communicated with your son/daughter regarding how you have felt, what you have gone through as they navigated through higher education?
25. What did members of your extended family say to you about your child to college/graduate school? How did that make you feel as a parent?
26. What are your biggest fears and concerns regarding your son/daughter and their educational journey?
27. What are your hopes for your son/daughter during and after graduate school?

*Impact of Child's Educational Journey on Family*

28. What impact do you feel that your son/daughter's academic accomplishments have had on you? In what way?
29. What impact do you feel that your son/daughter's academic accomplishments have had on other family members?

Part III: Closing

30. What would the child's other parent tell me differently?
31. Is there anything else you would want to share with me?

*Guión para identificar al padre que el estudiante prefiere sea entrevistado: ¿Cuál de tus padres crees que se sentiría más cómodo compartiendo su jornada educativa como padre, como también sus experiencias paternas mientras tú estudiabas en la universidad /escuela de posgrado; o cual de tus padres prefieres que hable conmigo?*

#### Parte I. Datos Demográficos

- ¿Cuál es su edad?
- ¿Dónde nació?
- ¿Si nació fuera del territorio continental de los Estados Unidos, cuándo emigró a los Estados Unidos?
- ¿Cuál fue el nivel de educación más alto que completó? ¿Dónde? ¿Cuándo?
- ¿Cuántos hijos tiene?
- ¿Qué edad tienen?
- ¿Cuántos de ellos atendieron la universidad?
- ¿Cuántos terminaron los estudios?
- ¿Cuál es su estado civil?
- ¿Cuál es su profesión/trabajo?

#### Parte II: Áreas Relacionadas a Procesos y Experiencias

##### *Teoría del Desarrollo Parental (TDP)*

##### *Preguntas Generales (Genéricas)*

1. ¿Cuál cree es el papel de un padre?
2. ¿Cómo describiría la experiencia de ser el padre de \_\_\_\_\_?

##### *Vínculos Afectivos*

3. ¿Cuándo su hija era una niña y adolescente (antes de que entrara a la universidad), como le demostraba que usted la amaba y que sentía afecto por ella?
4. ¿Cuándo su hija estaba en la universidad, cambio de alguna forma la manera en la que usted le demostraba su amor y afecto? Y ahora que está cursando el posgrado?

##### *Disciplina*

5. ¿Cómo le ponía límites y disciplina a su hija cuándo ella era una niña y adolescente?
6. ¿Cuándo su hija estaba en la universidad como cambio la manera en la cual le ponía límites y disciplina? ¿Y ahora que está haciendo su posgrado?

##### *Educación*

7. ¿Cuándo su hija era niña y adolécete, como usted trataba de educarla y guiarla?
8. ¿Cuándo fue a la universidad, como cambió la manera en que usted le proveía educación y guía ¿Cómo educa y guía a su hijo(a) ahora en su posgrado?

### *Bienestar y Protección*

9. ¿De qué manera proveía por las necesidades de su hija cuando era niña y adolescente?
10. ¿Si podía, cómo proveía por sus necesidades cuando ella estaba en la universidad? y ahora en el posgrado?
11. ¿cómo protegió a su hija, cuando era niña y adolescente? (antes de la universidad)?
12. ¿Cómo cambio la manera en la cual trataba de proteger a su hijo(a) cuando fue a la universidad? ¿ Y ahora en su posgrado?

### *Responsabilidad*

13. ¿Cuándo usted observa que su hija tiene una necesidad, cómo responde? (tiene algún ejemplo?)

### *Sensibilidad*

14. ¿En algún momento usted a presentido lo ocurre con su hija, y si si, deme ejemplos?

### *La Experiencia Paternal-La Experiencia Vivida*

15. ¿Por qué cree usted que su hijo o hija decidió ir a la universidad?
16. ¿Qué recuerda de esta decisión de su hijo?
17. ¿Cómo interactuaba/ se relacionaba con su hija durante el tiempo que ella estaba en la universidad? Y ahora que está cursando el posgrado? (¿Cuénteme un evento o historia que muestre como interactuaba usted con su hijo(a) en este período universitario o en el posgrado?)
18. ¿Cómo padre, como fue su experiencia durante la carrera universitaria de su hijo(a)? (por ejemplo, ¿Cómo se sintió cuando su hijo(a) le contaba lo que hacía en la universidad?)
19. ¿Cuándo su hijo(a) le comentó que quería hacer el doctorado qué fue lo que pensó? ¿Cómo se sintió?
20. ¿Cuáles fueron las experiencia más agradables que disfrutó mientras su hijo(a) seguía su carrera universitaria? (Si no aborda esta pregunta- Que dice de la escuela de posgrado?)
21. ¿Cuáles fueron sus experiencias más difíciles mientras su hijo(a) seguía su carrera universitaria? (Si no aborda esta pregunta- Que dice de la escuela de posgrado?)
22. ¿Si su hijo(a) se mudó para ir a la universidad, cómo se sintió cuando su hijo(a) le anunció que se iba de casa para ir a la universidad? ¿Cuénteme cómo se sintió por el asunto de la distancia?
23. ¿Si su hijo(a) se mudó fuera del estado para ir a la escuela de posgrado, cómo se sintió cuando su hijo(a) le anunció que se mudaba para ir a la escuela de posgrado? ¿Qué reto representa para usted el asunto de la distancia?
24. ¿Cuáles eran los comentarios de los familiares al momento de enterarse que su hija asistiría a la universidad? Como se sintió como padre?

25. ¿Hay alguna cosa que usted no le ha contado a su hijo(a) acerca de cómo se sintió/siente mientras él/ella seguía sus estudios superiores?
26. ¿Tiene alguna preocupación por su hija en este momento que se encuentra en su posgrado?
27. ¿Cuáles son sus expectativas para con su hijo(a) durante y después del posgrado?

#### Impacto del Viaje Educativo en la Familia

28. ¿Cree usted que los logros académicos de su hijo/a han tenido algún impacto (efecto) sobre usted? ¿De qué manera?
29. ¿Cree usted que los logros académicos de su hijo/a han tenido algún impacto (efecto) sobre otros miembros de su familia? ¿De qué manera?

#### Parte III: Final (Cierre)

30. ¿Si yo estuviera hablando con el papa, que me diría (sobre su experiencia?)
31. ¿Hay algo más que quiera compartir conmigo?

APPENDIX B  
REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

Dear Parent:

I hope you are doing well. My name is Natalia Leal Toro and I am a doctoral candidate in higher education and policy studies at the University of Central Florida (UCF). I am conducting a study in regards to the experience of Latino/a parents of first-generation college students who are pursuing a doctoral degree. Do you identify as Latino/a? Do you have a son/daughter who is pursuing a doctorate? If that is the case, I would appreciate if you could participate in my study.

You are invited to participate in a 60-90 minute interview with me, the principal investigator of this study. The interview will take place in person or via Skype, as per your preference. If you prefer an in person interview, you will have the opportunity to select the place you would prefer to meet with me. I would be happy to meet you at your preferred location.

Attached to this e-mail is a Consent Form that includes detailed information about this study. According to the form, you will not be asked to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You are also welcome to leave the study at any moment. In addition, the identity of the participants will remain anonymous, your name will not be revealed at any point.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please reply back to me to my e-mail address [Natalia.leal@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:Natalia.leal@knights.ucf.edu). I would be happy to respond to any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Natalia Leal Toro  
Doctoral Candidate  
College of Education and Human Performance  
University of Central Florida

Estimado padre:

Espero se encuentre bien. Mi nombre es Natalia Leal Toro y soy candidata al Doctorado en Educación Superior y Política en la Universidad de la Florida Central (UCF). Estoy llevando a cabo un estudio sobre la experiencia de los Padres Latinos de los estudiantes universitarios de primera generación en busca del Grado Doctoral. ¿Se identifica usted como Latino? ¿Tiene un hijo/hija que está cursando su doctorado? Si es así, le agradecería mucho su participación en mi estudio.

Usted esta invitado a participar en una entrevista de 60-90 minutos conmigo, la investigadora principal del estudio. La entrevista se llevará a cabo en persona o vía Skype, basado en su preferencia. Si prefiere una entrevista en persona, usted tendrá la oportunidad de seleccionar el sitio donde desea reunirse conmigo. Con mucho gusto me reuniré con usted en su lugar preferido.

Anexo a este correo electrónico hay un Formulario de Consentimiento que incluye información detallada sobre el estudio. De acuerdo al Formulario, no se le pedirá contestar preguntas con las cuales usted no se sienta cómodo. También puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento. Además, la identidad de todos los participantes del estudio se mantendrán anónima, su nombre no será revelado en ningún momento.

**Si usted está dispuesto a participar, favor responder a este correo electrónico: [natalia.leal@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:natalia.leal@knights.ucf.edu)** . Con mucho gusto contestaré a sus preguntas o preocupaciones. Espero oír de usted pronto.

Atentamente,

Natalia Leal Toro  
Candidata al Doctorado  
Facultad de Educación y Recursos Humanos  
University of Central Florida



APPENDIX C  
EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH



### **EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH**

Title of Project: Examining the Experiences of Latino/a Parents of First-Generation College Students Pursuing a Doctoral Degree

Principal Investigator: Natalia Leal Toro

Faculty Supervisor: Rosa Cintrón, Ph.D

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

- The purpose of this research study is to examine the experiences of Latino/a parents as they navigate parenting a high-achieving students through their educational journey towards a PhD. Understanding the perspectives and experiences of these parents can provide important insight to higher education administrators which can help them develop strategies to better support Latino/a parents and students who are navigating the higher education pipeline.
- You will be asked to participate in a 60-90 minute interview.
- The interview will take place in-person or via Skype, based on your preference. If you prefer an in-person interview, you will have the opportunity to select a location where you would prefer to meet with the Principal Investigator.
- You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you will not be able to be in the study. Discuss this with the principal investigator. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place. The tape will be erased or destroyed immediately after the interview is transcribed. Transcriptions, which will have no identifying information, will be kept for five years and then destroyed.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints Dr. Rosa Cintrón, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Educational and Human Sciences at 407-823-1248 or by email at [rosa.cintrondelgado@ucf.edu](mailto:rosa.cintrondelgado@ucf.edu).

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.



## **EXPLICACIÓN DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN**

Título del Proyecto: Examinando las Experiencias de los Padres Latinos de Estudiantes de Primera Generación en su Búsqueda por el Doctorado Académico.

Directora de la Investigación: Natalia Leal Toro

Directora de la Facultad: Rosa Cintrón, Ph.D

Usted está invitado(a) a participar en un estudio de investigación. La participación es voluntaria.

- El propósito de este estudio de investigación es examinar las experiencias de los padres Latinos mientras manejan la crianza de los estudiantes sobresalientes que hacen su jornada educativa hacia al Doctorado. El entender las perspectivas y experiencias de estos padres puede dar conocimientos importantes a los administradores de educación superior que les ayude a desarrollar estrategias para un mejor apoyo de los padres y estudiantes Latinos que navegan las redes de la educación superior.
- Se le pedirá participar en una entrevista de 60 a 90 minutos de duración.
- La entrevista será en persona o a través de Skype, como usted lo prefiera. Si prefiere la entrevista en persona, usted tiene la opción de escoger el lugar para reunirse con la directora de la investigación y llevar a cabo la entrevista.
- Usted será audio grabado(a) durante este estudio. Si no quiere ser grabado(a), no podrá participar en el estudio. Por favor, hable esto con la directora de la investigación. Si se hace una grabación de audio, la cinta se guardará bajo llave en un lugar seguro. La cinta será borrada o destruida una vez se haga la transcripción de la entrevista. La transcripción, la cual no tendrá información identificable, será guardada por cinco años y luego destruida.

Usted debe ser mayor de 18 años para participar en este estudio de investigación.

**Contacto para preguntas sobre el estudio o para reportar problemas:** Si tiene preguntas, preocupaciones o quejas: Dr. Rosa Cintrón, Facultad, Department of Educational and Human Sciences: 407-823-1248 o por email : [rosa.cintrondelgado@ucf.edu](mailto:rosa.cintrondelgado@ucf.edu)

**Contacto acerca de sus derechos en este estudio o para reportar una queja:** La investigación en la Universidad de Florida Central con participantes humanos es llevada a cabo bajo la supervisión del Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB ). Esta investigación ha sido revisada y aprobada por IRB. Para más información acerca de los derechos de las personas que participan en la investigación, por favor contacte: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 o por teléfono (407) 823-2901.



University of Central Florida IRB  
IRB NUMBER: SBE-16-12372  
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/30/2016

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**  
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Natalia Toro**

Date: **June 30, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 06/30/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: Examining the Experiences of Latino/a Parents of First-  
Generation College Students Pursuing a Doctoral Degree  
Investigator: Natalia Toro  
IRB Number: SBE-16-12372  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 06/30/2016 06:11:17 PM EDT

IRB Manager

APPENDIX E  
SAMPLE FIELD NOTES

La Experiencia Paternal-La Experiencia Vivida

her padre for her daughter  
is palpable

her love

Dos →  
nos →

Abonquitas

no gesticula

me lo dicen que es un

very in depth about  
the educational  
experience of her  
daughter →  
inherently →  
but more a  
praise

como llorando se  
hizo a error a esto  
de dolor - lleno  
de las palabras.

15. ¿Por qué cree usted que su hijo o hija decidió ir a la universidad? Tios (Me lo que su mamá está haciendo)
16. ¿Qué recuerda de esta decisión de su hijo? - una digna manera - orientación
17. ¿Como interactuaba/ se relacionaba con su hija durante el tiempo que ella estaba en la universidad? Y ahora que esta cursando el posgrado? (¿Cuénteme un evento o historia que muestre como interactuaba usted con su hijo(a) en este período universitario o en el posgrado?)
18. ¿Como padre, como fue su experiencia durante la carrera universitaria de su hijo(a)? (por ejemplo, ¿Cómo se sintió cuando su hijo(a) le contaba lo que hacía en la universidad?)
19. ¿Cuando su hijo(a) le comentó que quería hacer el doctorado qué fue lo que pensó? ¿Cómo se sintió? Feliz - poder que se hera de la cara.
20. ¿Cuáles fueron las experiencia más agradables que disfrutó mientras su hijo(a) seguía su carrera universitaria? (Si no aborda esta pregunta- Que dice de la escuela de posgrado?) → todo lo disfrutó todos felices de hacer cosa?
21. ¿Cuáles fueron sus experiencias más difíciles mientras su hijo(a) seguía su carrera universitaria? (Si no aborda esta pregunta- Que dice de la escuela de posgrado?)
22. ¿Si su hijo(a) se mudó para ir a la universidad, cómo se sintió cuando su hijo(a) le anunció que se iba de casa para ir a la universidad? ¿Cuénteme como se sintió por el asunto de la distancia? no pensé que iba a ser esto
23. ¿Si su hijo(a) se mudó fuera del estado para ir a la escuela de posgrado, cómo se sintió cuando su hijo(a) le anunció que se mudaba para ir a la escuela de posgrado? ¿Qué reto representa para usted el asunto de la distancia? su su su vendió apartamento
24. ¿Cuáles eran los comentarios de los familiares al momento de enterarse que su hija asistiría a la universidad? Como se sintió como padre? - Felicitaron - la primera de la familia - alegría
25. ¿Hay alguna cosa que usted no le ha contado a su hijo(a) acerca de cómo se sintió/siente mientras el/ella seguía sus estudios superiores? → entrena mal → dos meses aquí sola
26. ¿Tiene alguna preocupacion por su hija en este momento que se encuentra en su posgrado? → no preocupada
27. ¿Cuáles son sus expectativas para con su hijo(a) durante y después del posgrado?

APPENDIX F  
HORIZONTALIZATION PROCESS SAMPLE



464 ganas, eso que ella tiene. Cumplí una meta. Y súper orgullosísima...súper orgullosa, sí. No cabía en mi  
465 felicidad ni en mi orgullo.

466 Interviewer: Okay, ya casi estamos al final. Hay alguna cosa que usted no le haya contado a su hija  
467 acerca de como siento o se siente mientras ella esta buscando su carrera universitaria?

468 Mother: Yo pienso que es lo mismo, yo siempre la apoyo y no, no le dejo muchas veces # *hnd felings*  
469 conocer mis sentimientos de, porque eso la lastima...entonces ella se da cuenta a veces que me dice ↓ *to protect*  
470 "Hay...no te pongas así". "No estoy bien!" abecés se me sale. Pero, esa es la parte que yo no le cuento a *daughter*  
471 ella que he llorado y que me he sentido, quisiera que no se fuera. Pero esas cosas que uno quiere ↓ *hurt*  
472 hablarlas pero que dice "no las debo hablar", por no lastimarla, y porque yo se que no las debo  
473 hablar, no esta bien para nada, ni para ella ni para mi. Eso es lo único.

474 Interviewer: Y...tiene alguna preocupación por su hija ahora que ya esta haciendo su posgrado? o  
475 algo que usted diga...ahh...?

476 Mother: Pues mi preocupación si la tengo ahorita que ella ha invertido muchísimo tiempo  
477 de su vida, de su salud...en la carrera. Y esa es mi preocupación. Que yo quisiera decirle "ya no estudie  
478 mas! ya"...porque la salud de ella esta bien afectada. Entonces esa es mi preocupación. la parte física y *worried abt*  
479 psicológica de ella. Es lo único que me preocupa. En cuanto al posgrado, no, yo quiero que ella cumpla *health of*  
480 su sueño y lo realice y todo...pero mi preocupación es la salud física y mental de ella ahorita. *daughter*

481 Interviewer: Cuales son sus expectativas para su hija durante y después del posgrado? Ósea,  
482 cuales son "your hopes"

483 Mother: Um, sí. Bueno durante el posgrado, yo pienso, que es lo que ella esta cumpliendo su  
484 sueño. Y...de marcar la diferencia en el mundo...si me entiende? esa es como mi expectativa que ella  
485 logre su sueño como mujer profesional, y segundo...que esta marcando una diferencia grande...en el  
486 área de ella, donde ella se mueve. Esa es como como mi mayor sueño, de que ella lo esta logrando, de  
487 que ella lo esta haciendo, esta haciendo algo que muchas personas que tiene todas las herramientas  
488 no lo están haciendo. Si me entiende? Entonces mis expectativas yo creo que están llenas con ella. #

489 Interviewer: Okay...um, y esto ya lo hablo también, pero si hay algo que quiere añadir. Cree usted  
490 que los logros académicos de su hija han tenido algún impacto sobre usted...y ya hablamos de eso  
491 bastante; y cree usted que los logros académicos de su hija han tenido algún impacto sobre otros  
492 miembros de su familia

493 Mother: si sí, ella a impactado muchísimo a los primos, pero especialmente, especialmente *impact on*  
494 a la hermana. Si la hermana quiere seguir los pasos quiere hacer una carrera de ciencia. Aunque son *sister who*  
495 bien diferentes en muchas cosas. (Mi hija mayor) es mas de la casa, (la hija menor) es así. Porque (la *wants to follow*  
496 hija menor) ya sabe que tiene que ir al college, ella ya sabe que tiene que hacer una carrera. Ella *Bobbi's*  
497 quiere también hacer un doctorado. Entonces la parte mas importante que es que la ha *and how*  
498 impactado a la hermana. *a doctor*  
*in science*

499 Interviewer: Okay, las ultimas preguntas para cerrar...si yo estuviera hablando con el padre, que  
500 me diría diferente sobre su experiencia? en pocas palabras

APPENDIX G  
THEME IDENTIFICATION PROCESS SAMPLE

## Themes

### Support (~~apoyo~~)/Push them (~~empujarlos~~)/Motivation

**Ana:** "El papel ~~como~~ padre yo piense que es apoyarlos. Y aparte de apoyarlos, empujarlos. Eso es mas importante...Para mi lo mas importante, fue empujarlos. Empujarlos. Y empujar y dar mi apoyo, darle mi amor y confianza siempre. Siempre que nunca va a estar sola, que ahí voy a estar yo" (Interview 1 ~~Lines~~ 28-32)

**Ana:** "...que no me ha tocado esfuerzo académico, sino el otro esfuerzo, el de la fe, de decir que va a poder, el apoyo, el empuje" (Interview 1, lines 47-48)

**Gabriela:** en la Universidad - "este apoyándola. apoyándola en todo lo que podía, haciéndole saber que allí estaba para ella en lo que necesitara. Y que a pesar de la distancia habían muchas formas en que ella podía contar conmigo. Y que yo estaba allí para ella igual." (Interview 6, ~~lines~~ 73-75)

**Gabriela:** Si, que todas las madres, este, hay que apoyarlos, aunque tome, no sea la carrera que sonamos para ellos, porque toda madre siempre suena, hay, quiero que mi hijo sea esto, pero que hay que apoyarlo lo que ellos escojan, porque después de todo quienes van ha estar viviendo diariamente con eso es ellos, y no somos nosotros, un día nos vamos y ellos se quedan...y queremos que sean felices, entonces hay que apoyarlos en lo que escojan, y ~~y~~ estar ahí para ellos, pero también respetar sus espacios, muy importante. No ser tan mama ~~hen~~ (risas) no hace bien para la presión arterial. (Interview 6, ~~Lines~~ 328-333)

### On helping them overcome adversity in grad school through support

**Ana:** "Entonces yo como aprendí de mi vida tantas cosas con mi mama, yo nunca he llorado con ella, y mi corazón llora y se me parte en pedacitos chiquitos...pero yo siempre así como estoy hablando, y yo le dije "que te pasa, dime que tienes" y yo, hay Dios mío dame fuerza. Lloro, yo la deje que llorara. Y me dijo, "es que me siento sola, los extraño" ósea se sentía la soledad. "Yo no se si lo pueda hacer, me siento 'down". Entonces yo le di palabra a ella, yo le dije "tu puedes, tu eres una berraca, Dios te puso allá" (Interview 1, lines 239-244)

**Ana:** "Tu vas a continuar porque tu eres fuerte. Tu no naciste para dejar las cosas botadas, yo no voy a decirte 'hay mamita, vente para aca, porque te vas a frustrar. Yo quiero que tu seas feliz y quiero que cumplas esa estapa. Aca yo voy a estar siempre voy a estar para ti. Pero yo quiero que tu sigas adelante" (Interview 1, lines 249-252)

APPENDIX H  
THEME REDUCTION SAMPLE

	Ana	Blanca	Celeste/ David	Elsa	Federico	Gabriela
Support	X	X	X	X	X	X
Motivation/ Encouragement	X	X	X		X	X
Active support for Education	X	X	X		X	X
High levels of communication/ Interaction	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quality of interactions	X	X	X		X	
Wish of fulfilling Career (not money, but giving back; feeling fulfilled)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pain of distance	X	X	X	X	X	X
Keeping challenges from children/sacrifice	X	X			X	X
Parents experiencing college	X	X	X	X	X	
Children as teachers			X		X	X
Financial Concerns	X		X	X		
God/Faith	X	X			X	

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