LATINA/O FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS AND COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF FAMILY SUPPORT PROCESSES

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LATINA/O FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS AND COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF FAMILY SUPPORT PROCESSES

by

Patricia R. Cerda-Lizarraga

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
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First generation Latina/o college students are at a higher risk for not completing their college degrees when compared to other ethnic minorities due to added barriers and challenges of being the first to go to college. Researchers reported that poor college adjustment is one of the factors contributing to the lack of college completion among Latina/o college students. A few studies exist on the role that family support has on the college adjustment of Latina/o students and these yielded mixed findings. The central role of the family among Latina/o students and their support during the college adjustment period merits attention. Consequently, a qualitative multiple case study is ideal for exploring what family support consists of and the role it has on the transition and college adjustment of Latina/o first generation college students. Furthermore, the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of family support and their influence on college adjustment were examined within the psychosociocultural framework.

College students and their parents were interviewed separately. The students participated in two interviews. The information of the first interview was used to construct a family genogram. The second set of student interviews and the parent interviews focused on family support. The data of the second student interview and the
parent dyad were analyzed case by case, resulting in five to six themes for each family. A cross-case analysis was followed, resulting in six themes across all cases. These themes included: (a) cultural values and *consejos* in higher education; (b) types of support received in higher education; (c) finding my place in college, soy Latina/o; (d) the emotional journey of transition to college; (e) college adjustment strategies; and (f) challenges encountered in college. These themes represent salient issues that four Latina/o first generation college students and their parents experienced during the transition and subsequent period of adjustment to college, while highlighting the role that family support had during this process. Implications for research and practice are also discussed.
Dedication

For my parents who came to this country in search of a better future and always encouraged me to pursue a career and go to college. Thank you for all your support throughout the years. To my husband and son, thank you for the love and support you give me each and every day. This is for you!
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My journey to obtain my Ph.D. has not followed the linear plan I once imagined. Life brought me good surprises that deviated my journey. In the end through hard work, perseverance and the support of family, friends and my professors I was finally able to accomplish my educational goals. I am excited to begin my professional journey as a Psychologist.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The transition from high school to college is a major milestone in the lives of many young adults and their families. However, when the student belongs to an ethnic minority group, and is the first in his or her family to attend college, this transition brings with it a set of barriers or deterrent factors that are worth examining. Researchers have found that the culture of the family along with financial concerns, as well as social and interpersonal factors (Solorzano, 1993; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000) can affect degree attainment for first-generation Latino college students (Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, von Hippel, & Lerner, 1998; Nora, 1987). Furthermore, the relative lack of significant numbers of individuals from one’s own culture attending colleges and universities provides an additional barrier to postsecondary attendance. Without role models, it is often difficult to envision this path as one that is truly available to the Latina/o high school student. The literature also points to college transition and adjustment as vital to one’s retention in and completion of college. In fact, higher education researchers have been clear in concluding that successful adjustment to college (including academic, social and personal-emotional adjustment) is a good predictor of student graduation (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Mallinckrodt, 1988) and negatively related to attrition rates (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). While the culture of the family can be both an asset and a deficit when it comes to college attendance and subsequent success, it has been found that maintaining family relationships is one factor that contributes to facilitating college adjustment for Latino full time students (Hurtado et al., 1996).
For the Latino culture, the family unit holds great importance throughout one’s life. Consequently, it can be hypothesized that family is likely to play an important role in a college student’s life, even when the college student is no longer living at home. Going to college for many Latinos involves a separation from home and family, and successfully dealing with this separation may be one of the hurdles needed to surmount to facilitate adjustment to college. Some researchers have found that family can be helpful in student retention if the family is familiar with the college environment and can develop relationships with college administrators and faculty (Hernandez, 2000). This type of family support, however, may be largely unavailable for those students who are the first in their families to attend college. A recent study that focused on first-generation college students reported that, while parents and other family members could not provide the student with information and resources regarding college attainment and persistence, the maintenance of family relationships was nevertheless critical for these first-generation college students in their pursuit of a college degree (Saunders & Serna, 2004). These researchers also reported that family serves as a source of strength and comfort for many first-generation college students. At the same time, some of these students struggle balancing family issues with the demands of being a full-time college student (Saunders & Serna, 2004). It appears, then, that family can be a double-edged sword for some Latino college students who struggle with balancing academic responsibilities and the maintenance of family relationships.

While parents of first-generation college students may have a positive attitude about education, their unfamiliarity with the educational system in the United States may
be a major factor in limiting their ability to help their children navigate the road to college (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004). Furthermore, it is very likely that these same parents may not understand the differences between attending community college/trade school versus a 4-year institution. Families with strong traditional values and rigid gender roles may have a difficult time allowing their daughter to move away from home to attend college. Findings from a qualitative study on first-generation Latina students reported that families questioned their daughter’s decisions to leave home to attend college; the daughters were accused of abandoning the family; and loyalty to the family was questioned (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). It is possible that for some Latinas, not having their family support to move away will not only limit the opportunities for Latinas to attend a university of their choice, but it also deprives them of what is often viewed as an essential aspect of the college experience, campus life. Latino sons, on the other hand, may be at greater liberty to move away from home for college, but may choose not to live too far from home, especially if there are younger siblings. Additionally, Latino males may have a stronger need to contribute financially to their family upon college graduation in order to fulfill the cultural and gender role as a provider (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). The need to contribute to the family through work for immigrant Latinos may “supersede their desire to attain a higher education” (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009, p. 76). It is therefore likely that some of the young male Latino college graduates will choose to begin their career in order to help out their families financially instead of pursuing graduate school.
In order to gain a better understanding of what first generation Latina/o college students experience as they adjust to college and the role that their families play in this process, a multiple case qualitative study was used as it is ideal to shed light on this critical topic. The Latino population is quite disadvantaged when it comes to educational attainment at all levels, from high school to college and beyond. Many factors come together to exacerbate the lack of educational attainment among this population in the United States.

The most recent U.S. census data indicate that Latinos currently constitute the largest minority group in the United States (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Their population has reached more than 50 million and they currently comprise 16.3% of the U.S. population. Future projections of this population indicate that, by the year 2050, 1 out of 4 individuals in the United States will be Latina/o. This rapid increase in population growth has serious implications for colleges and universities that are already struggling to deal with this change in demographics. Not surprisingly, both currently and in the coming decades, colleges and universities must take the necessary steps to deal with the needs of this population. Before continuing, however, it will be important to explore who makes up this population of Latinas/os.

The terms Hispanics and Latinas/os are often used interchangeably in multicultural literature (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). According to Santiago-Rivera et al. (2002), the term Hispanic first appeared in 1978 when Office of Management and Budget created it as part of a federal order whose purpose was to "categorize a group of people not by specific country of origin with
unique history, religion indigenous roots, cultural traditions and foods but rather by a common language, namely Spanish” (p. 21). The term is problematic and not accepted by those individuals who find it to be misleading (i.e., leading others to believe that they have one common culture or racial category), offensive and of no personal significance (Santigao-Rivera et al., 2002). Still, it is possible to find groups of individuals that prefer the term Hispanic over Latina/o. A general guideline holds that, whenever possible, one should defer to the individuals being addressed or referred to, and allow them to choose the term they prefer. In so doing, one empowers them and gives them a voice, rather than merely imposing a label. According to Falicov (1998) the term Latina/o is preferred “because it reaffirms their native, pre-Hispanic identity” (p. 34). Furthermore the term Latina/o is geographically more accurate, referring to individuals from Latin America (taking into account those individuals who are of Indigenous ancestry) and not from Spain (Falicov, 1998). Needless to say, the discourse on appropriate labels for this population is ongoing and researchers will choose what they believe is best in their studies. Because of personal preference, throughout this paper I have chosen to use the term Latina/o when discussing this population, consistent with many other researchers in this field.

Despite the broadly inclusive label, it is important to understand that Latinas/os are by no means a homogenous group. There is substantial within-group variability among this population. The term Latina/o is very complex and includes groups of people whose nationalities extend from countries that include Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and South and Central America (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004).
More generally it includes all persons in the United States who self-identify as Hispanic or Latina/o (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Hispanic and Latinas/os are racially diverse, although predominantly white or mestizo. It is important to note that mestizo is not a race, but it is a person who has both White and American Indian ancestry. As a result of their racial diversity, Hispanics form an ethnicity, sharing a language and cultural heritage, rather than a race. American Hispanics are predominantly of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Salvadorian, and Cuban ancestry (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001). Consequently, given all of this variability among the Latina/o population, researchers must caution themselves not to assume that their findings with a subset of Latinas/os generalize to the whole group.

Adding to the variability among Latinas/os is their immigration history. Depending upon their country of origin, and their political and economic situations, Latinas/os migrate to the United States for many different reasons. Among these are a desire to escape political change, or to pursue better economic opportunities and better educational opportunities (Falicov, 1998). The migration of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans can best be understood as a result of seeking better economic opportunities (Falicov, 1998). In the case of Cubans, however, migration, for the most part, is the result of fleeing political turmoil in their home country and seeking refuge in the United States (Falicov, 1998). Finally, many migrants from Central and South America enter the United States for both economic and political reasons. The various reasons for entry into the United States have important implications for the positions these individuals hold in
the labor force and, indirectly, influence on the number and manner of Latinas/os seeking higher education.

Not only do Latinas/os differ in their country of origin, they also vary with respect to their socioeconomic status and educational attainment once in the United States. For example, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans appear to be the most disadvantaged as it relates to socioeconomic status. According to the U.S. Census Hispanic Population Report (Ramirez, 2000), Puerto Ricans followed by Mexicans had the highest percentage of families living below the poverty line where Puerto Ricans accounted for 26.7% and Mexicans accounted for 24.4% of families living below poverty in the U.S. Cubans, on the other hand, had the lowest level of families in poverty (11%). In regards to educational attainment, the U.S. Census report on Hispanic populations (Ramirez, 2000) indicates that Mexicans have the lowest educational attainment among Latinas/os, where only 49.7% have a high school diploma and 7.1% have a bachelors degree or higher. In contrast, Central and South Americans (18%), as well as Cubans (24.8%) have the highest proportion with a bachelors degree or higher (Ramirez, 2000).

The fact that, overall, Latinas/os have low educational attainment in high school and college when compared to other ethnic minorities has serious implications for the types of jobs and careers that are accessible to them. As a result, it is not surprising that researchers have found an underrepresentation of Latinos in higher education and an overrepresentation of them in low-paying, unskilled labor. This point is highlighted in Liu and Rodriguez’s (2004) research indicating that most Latinas/os entering the workforce find unskilled occupations. Additionally the U.S. Department of Labor (2003)
reported that Latinas/os are underrepresented in both management and professional occupations.

As the largest ethnic minority group with the fastest population growth, Latinas/os already make up a large portion of the labor force in the United States, and this will only grow. Having an educated labor force is essential if the United States hopes to continue competing economically with other powerful nations. The lack of Latina/o educational attainment will negatively impact the upward mobility of Latinos, as well as limit the political power necessary to effect change in their communities (Gloria, 1998).

Recent statistics on the lack of educational attainment of Latinas/os is alarming. Not only do Latinas/os have high dropout rates in high school, they are also less likely to complete a GED compared to other groups. Lack of educational attainment is also visible at the college level, where only a small percentage will complete a bachelor’s degree.

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, recent census data regarding Latinas/os’ college enrollment and trends indicate that Latina/o college students tend to be older than traditional college students and are also more likely to enroll in community colleges rather than four year institutions. Similarly, the completion of GED’s among Latinas/os is also comparatively low. One in ten Latinas/os who drop out will obtain a GED compared to two in ten Black high school dropouts and three in ten White high school dropouts. (Fry, 2010). Completion of a high school degree or GED differed based upon whether Latinas/os were foreign born or native born. Fifty-two percent (52%) of foreign born Latinas/os were high school dropouts compared to 25% of native born Latinos. This educational trend holds true for the completion of GED’s, where 5% of foreign born
Latinas/os obtained a GED compared to 21% of native born Latinas/os. Needless to say, these findings have serious implications for the employment opportunities and well-being of Latinas/os in the United States.

Regarding post-secondary education, Latinas/os have made some strides in the number of individuals enrolling in colleges and universities. Recent statistics show that Latinas/os are currently earning more associate’s and bachelor degrees than ever before (Fry & Lopez, 2012). The recent increase in enrollment now makes Latinas/os the largest ethnic minority group in 4-year colleges. While at face value these findings are promising, we must look deeper to understand what is happening to these students. While many Latinas/os enroll in institutions of higher education, too few complete their degrees. The number of degrees obtained by Latina/o students continues to fall short when compared to other groups. Of all college degrees conferred in the U.S. in 2010, only 8.5% of bachelor’s degrees and 13.2% of associate’s degrees were obtained by Latina/o students. While separate figures were not broken out regarding Latinas/os’ enrollment in 2-year versus 4-year colleges, the overall figure of 15% of the college population being Latina/o indicates a substantial gap remains between attending and completing college (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Furthermore, Latinas/os continue to trail behind other groups, including non-Hispanic blacks and non-Hispanic whites in enrollment and completion. It is clear from these statistics that researchers must continue to work at understanding factors that contribute to college success in order to better serve this growing population.
Statement of the Problem

First generation Latina/o college students are at a higher risk of not graduating when compared to other ethnic groups. Many leave school without completing their degrees. Researchers have highlighted poor college adjustment as one of the contributing factors that deter Latina/o college students from completing their degrees. However, the findings regarding the role of family support on college adjustment have been few and mixed. Given that family is a core cultural value for Latinas/os, a qualitative study that investigates the role of family support during the transitional period of college adjustment among first generation Latina/o college students can begin to address a significant gap in the literature.

The aim of this study was to understand the role that family support plays in the college adjustment of Latina/o students. This study focused on first generation Latina/o college students and their parents. First-generation Latina/o college students who have already completed their first quarter of their freshman year and whose parents are willing and able to participate were recruited for this study. Students who are enrolled in their first year of college were asked to discuss lived experiences of support during their college adjustment, as well as the roles that their families may have played in providing support during their transition and college adjustment. Similarly, the parents of these students were also interviewed and asked to reflect on their child’s transition to college, and to discuss the types of support they provided that may have contributed to their child’s college adjustment.
Research Questions

The present study aimed to answer the following three central questions:

1. How do first generation Latina/o college students experience family support in their college adjustment?
2. How do parents provide support during their daughter/son’s college adjustment?
3. What are the psychosociocultural dimensions of Latina/o family support processes?

In addition to the central questions, this study also addressed the following underlying questions:

1a. What constitutes family for first generation Latino college students?
2a. How is family support defined by first generation Latino/a students?
3a. How is family support differentially experienced by Latino females and males?
4a. How does family support affect the college adjustment of first generation Latina/o students?
5a. How do the psychosociocultural dimensions of support influence Latina/o college adjustment?

In addition to the student interviews, the parents of these student participants were also recruited to participate and were interviewed separately from their child. Both the mother and father of the student were interviewed together. Their questions mirrored those asked of their son or daughter.
1b. What other family members, if any, are involved in providing support to their son/daughter?

2b. How do the parents describe the provision of support to their daughter/son when they went to college? Has this support changed over time?

3b. How has their son/daughter moving away for college affected the family (their relationship with the parents, and or siblings)? How do they remain connected?
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Higher Education in the United States

Circumstances are changing in the United States, becoming more difficult to achieve the American Dream. In the not too distant past the standard in education was obtaining a high school diploma, and this attainment, more or less, assured entry into the economic middle class. However, in the past few decades, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that a high school diploma alone is not enough to ensure adequate employment, much less economic stability or upward mobility. Furthermore, the current job market is quite competitive and requires individuals to possess, at a minimum, certification in a trade and preferably, a college degree. This imperative was recently highlighted by President Barack Obama, who indicated that “the economic issue of our time” is education, and he further elaborated that eight out of ten new jobs created in the United States will be filled by individuals who have higher education degrees (Obama, 2010).

At the same time, the U.S. is facing major changes in its cultural makeup, and current demographics indicate a more diverse nation than ever before. When reporting on population trends and statistics from the U.S. Census, this author will use the term Hispanic to stay consistent with the terminology used by the Census. As noted previously, however, it is this author’s preference to use the term Latino, and this is the term that will be employed when discussing this population regarding anything other than census-related data.
The 2010 U. S. Census reports that the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States in the 10-year span since the last census include Hispanics and Asians (Humes, et al., 2011). The rate of growth among the Latino population was 43%, while the Asian population also grew by 43%. The overall rate of growth by the Non-Hispanic population was 5%. A growth rate of 1% was found for Non-Hispanic Whites (Humes, et. al., 2011). It is also important to note that more than half of the total population growth in the U.S is attributable to increases in the Hispanic population. The implications of these findings from the Census report point to a continuation of diversification in the U.S., especially in light of the fact that Hispanic and Asian individuals contribute the largest population growth.

While Non-Hispanic Whites experienced the least growth and were the only group to experience a decrease in the proportion of total population (from 69 to 64% between 2000 and 2010), they continue to be the largest ethnic group, both numerically and proportionally (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). In the most recent census, Non-Hispanic Whites accounted for 62.6% of the population in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2013). Hispanics accounted for 17.1% of the population, followed by African Americans, accounting for 13.2%, and then Asians, accounting for 5.3% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2013).

Consequently, and not surprisingly, the racial composition of our schools is also rapidly changing. Despite these changes in demographics within the U.S., there is no comparable increase in high school graduation, much less college admission and completion, among many of these growing minority groups. It is critical that researchers
begin to devote time to understand the needs of these growing minority groups, in order to provide them with the tools necessary to succeed academically and to reduce the achievement gap that exists in the educational system in the United States. The achievement gap refers to a difference in academic performance between whites and ethnic minorities (Carpenter, Ramirez, & Savern, 2006).

According to a status report by the American Council on Education (ACE) on minorities in higher education, the nation has seen an increase in the enrollment of college students among all ethnicities in the U.S between 1990 and 2010. Over this 20-year span, an overall increase of 10% of college age students, 18-24 years old, has been realized (Ryu, 2010). Data collected by ACE from Whites, African Americans and Hispanics point to ethnic disparities in the disproportionate rates of educational gains by the different groups. Specifically, the group with the greatest educational gains was White students, who increased enrollment rates by 14% between 1990 and 2009 and comprised 46% of the college enrollment (ages 18-24) in the U.S. African Americans made smaller gains by increasing enrollment by 12% and accounting for 35% of college enrollment. Hispanic college age students, ages 18-24 years old, increased college enrollment by 13%, but only accounted for 29% of college enrollment and continue to have the lowest college enrollment rates (Kim, 2011). Thus, a need exists to examine the discrepancies that are currently contributing to the low educational attainment of students of color, including Latinas/os.

A closer look at the different ethnic groups points to disparities in the number of bachelor’s degrees earned. Asian Americans currently earn the most bachelor’s degrees
as a proportion of their total population in the U.S., accounting for 58% between the ages of 25 to 29; next are Whites with 36%; followed by African Americans with 18%; and then Hispanics, with 12%. Even lower than Hispanics are American Indians with 10% (Kim, 2011). Another interesting trend noted in the report by ACE is that younger generations are making fewer educational gains compared to the previous generations. Summarizing, graduation rates and college entry discrepancies, as defined by ethnicity, point to the need to understand why these discrepancies exist. Latina/o student rates are disproportionately lower than all other ethnicities after Native Americans. Thus, the present study is designed to explore the experience of the Latina/o student, particularly focusing on the transition and adjustment to college in an attempt to understand the role that family support plays in this adjustment process.

**Influences on Attending College and Educational Goals**

Researchers in the area of higher education suggest that the educational goals of college students are influenced by three critical factors: family, prior educational settings, and future occupational options (Cote & Levine, 1997). In addition, these researchers also suggest that the reasons for going to college among ethnically diverse students differ from those of students of European origin. Phinney, Dennis, and Osorio (2006) suggest that, for ethnic minority and immigrant students, issues of social class, generation of immigration, as well as cultural factors, may influence their reasons for going to college. Phinney et al. (2006) believe that understanding the reasons and motivations for attending college may shed light on college attendance and completion rates of ethnic minorities, including Latinas/os and African Americans. In an attempt to answer these critical
questions, Phinney et al. (2006) revised the Student Motivation for Attending University Scale, which was originally used in Cote and Levine’s (1997) study on reasons why students attend college, and applied it to an ethnically diverse sample of college students that included those from low and middle SES backgrounds. His revision of the Student Motivation for Attending University Scale offered some new reasons for attending college not assessed in the original scale and included a subscale that measured the desire to help one’s family, as well as another subscale that measured the desire to prove to others that one can succeed academically. These subscales were named “Helping Family” and “Prove Worth,” respectively. The results of the study indicate that, for ethnic minority students, especially Asian Americans and Latina/o students, helping family was the most strongly endorsed reason for attending college. Among African Americans, helping family was second in importance. Additionally, for all three ethnic minority groups, it was found that helping family was significantly more important than it was for European Americans. Phinney et al.’s (2006) findings support previous findings regarding academic motivation (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). Specifically, Fuligni et al. (1999) found that the desire to help their families financially was the chief motivation of adolescents from immigrant families. The Prove Worth subscale measured students’ desire to go to college as a result of wanting to prove to others that they could achieve academic success. This subscale distinguished the three ethnic minorities from the European American students, with the European Americans scoring significantly lower than ethnic minority students (Phinney et al. 2006). Two subscales named “Expectation” and “Default” measured attending college because you are expected to do so and
attending college due to a lack of alternatives, respectively, and were found to be more important for Asian American students than for the other groups in the study. One other reason for going to college was receiving encouragement from others to go to college, and, significantly, this subscale was found to be important across all groups (Phinney et al., 2006). Additionally, this study “identified demographic and cultural factors that underlie ethnic differences,” and included socioeconomic status, the cultural value of family interdependence, and ethnic identity, all of which predicted one’s reasons for attending college. In regards to SES, individuals with low-income backgrounds were more likely to attend college to help their families, independent of ethnic group and cultural variables. Family interdependence, a cultural value held by Latina/os, as well as other ethnic groups, including Asian Americans and African Americans, was also predictive of reasons to attend college. Students with interdependent self-construals may be motivated to attend college when they are encouraged by others (including family members) to attend college (Phinney et al., 2006). Similarly, ethnic identity was also found to be a significant reason to attend college, in that a secure ethnic identity “provides a sense of direction in one’s life, which may translate into higher academic achievement” (Phinney et al., 2006, p. 362).

In summary, there are varied reasons why individuals decide to go to college, some of which differentiate ethnic minority students from white students. Of particular interest for the present study are those reasons that motivate Latina/o students to go to college, and include wanting to help family, as well as wanting to prove to others that they could succeed academically, and receiving encouragement from others to attend
college. Once again, the importance of family among Latina/o students is highlighted in the students’ desire to help their family, but also in the finding that family interdependence significantly predicted the reason why these students go to college. Furthermore, the fact that family interdependence also positively correlated with a desire to help family may point to a personal choice to help family because it is in line with the cultural value of family interdependence and not because it is imposed by the family. Given the importance of helping family and family interdependence among Latina/os’ reasons for going to college, one can reasonably hypothesize that family would also play a central role in the transition and adjustment to college among Latinas/os.

**Psychosociocultural Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework that allows researchers to gain a holistic understanding of Latinos in higher education is the Psychosociocultural (PSC) approach. This framework consists of three overlapping dimensions: the psychological, cultural, and social dimensions that interconnect and help explain college persistence. While this framework takes into account a holistic approach by exploring issues that affect Latinos in higher education from a psychological, social and cultural dimension collectively, each dimension on its own also helps explain academic experiences and persistence in higher education. This framework was selected for this study because it takes into account the social dimension (i.e., family) and how it affects Latina/os’ educational experience. The present study is interested in exploring the role of family support on the transition and adjustment to college and will therefore focus primarily on one part of the PSC framework, the social dimension.
The Psychosociocultural approach was originally intended to inform counselors working with Latina/o undergraduate students and to shed light on the students’ academic experience. PSC included the exploration of psychological factors, such as self-esteem and self-efficacy, social factors, such as family and mentors, and cultural factors, such as ethnic identity (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Since it was first developed, this approach has been employed with faculty and administrators who work with Latina/o students. Additionally, PSC has been used as an empirically tested conceptual framework that examines student persistence among Latino students (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez & Rosales, 2005), as well as among students from other ethnic minority groups, including African Americans and Asian Americans (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Gloria & Ho, 2003).

The psychological dimension consists of, but is not limited to issues of self-perception, particularly how individuals feel about their skills and their ability to succeed academically (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003). Examples of self-perception variables that could be included in the psychological dimension are self-esteem and self-efficacy. A recent study found that self-esteem was one of the strongest predictors of overall adjustment among Latina/o college students (Yazedjian & Toews, 2006). Specifically, this study found that students reported greater college adjustment when they had higher self-esteem, were more acculturated, and had a stronger ethnic identity. Previous studies that found self-esteem to be a strong predictor of college adjustment include the work of Boulter (2002) and Caplan, Henderson, Henderson, & Fleming (2002). However, these studies were not specific to Latina/o college students. The second term, self-efficacy, has
been defined by Bandura (1997) as a belief in one’s ability to successfully execute a behavior required to produce a certain outcome. According to Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007), there are many studies that address self-efficacy in connection with academic performance, and those studies have consistently found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1986). Specifically, this positive relationship has been found among science majors (Lent et al., 1986); engineering majors (Hackett et al., 1992); as well as first year college students (Chemers et al., 2001). In a study that looked at the relationship between first generation college students’ self-efficacy and college adjustment, it was found that “regardless of generation status, a higher level of self efficacy predicted a higher level of self perceived college adjustment” (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007, p. 12). Furthermore the level of self-efficacy at the beginning of the academic year significantly predicted the students’ college adjustment at the end of the year (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). In summary, exploring the psychological variables of self-perception (self-esteem and self-efficacy) within the psychological dimension has resulted in findings that indicate they are strong predictors of positive college adjustment.

The next dimension that is part of the PSC framework is the social dimension. This dimension can include support from a wide range of individuals, including faculty members, peers, and family, as well as other groups, including a fraternity or sorority or other student organization. This dimension also includes parents’ encouragement to attend college. According to Gloria and Rodriguez (2000), social support is defined as
“the helpfulness of social relationships and the resources exchanged among members of the support systems” (pp. 149-150). Research on social support has found that social support from family is predictive of Latina/o student success and academic persistence (Alva, 1991; Gloria & Robinson-Kurpius, 1996). These studies, however, look at social support from a quantitative perspective and are thus limited in their ability to capture the essential nature of the support. The present study aims to expand the knowledge regarding the nature of this support and how it affects the transition and adjustment among first generation Latina/o college students.

Finally, the cultural dimension of the PSC framework can include but is not limited to issues of cultural incongruity, ethnic identity and acculturation. Cultural incongruity relates to how the student’s values fit within the university atmosphere. Specifically, this draws upon the students’ cultural values and how these values may or may not be congruent with those values that are central to institutions of higher education (Castellanos & Gloria, 2003). According to Gloria and Robinson-Kurpius (1996), Latino students will encounter cultural incongruence in higher education especially when these students from lower SES are placed into a middle class university environment in which cultural values are very different from their own (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Castellanos and Gloria (2007) describes the university as being dominated by values that include independence, competition, and self-importance. In contrast, many Latina/os hold values that are incongruent with those mentioned above and include interdependence, collaboration, group-importance (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007). Gloria and Rodriguez (2000) report that Latina/os students are “faced with the need to adopt a bicultural
understanding of themselves in academia” (p. 147). While adopting a bicultural identity in an academic setting may be ideal for academic advancement, juggling both the native and academic cultures may be stressful for students.

In addition to cultural incongruity, ethnic identity and acculturation can form part of the cultural dimension of the PSC framework. Ethnic identity refers to how individuals understand their ethnicity and how they identify with their ethnic group (Phinney, 1996) and the extent to which exploration regarding ones ethnic group has occurred (Phinney, 1992). Ethnic identity is particularly important for ethnic minorities as it must be incorporated into their self-concepts (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992). Researchers have found that ethnic identity may act as a buffer between stressful experiences and negative outcomes (Shelton, Yip, Eccles, Chatman, Fuligni, & Wong, 2005). Furthermore, ethnic identity has been found to improve psychological well-being among ethnically diverse individuals (Phinney, 1992). According to Phiney (1990) ethnic identity and acculturation are interrelated but different constructs. Acculturation refers to a bidirectional interactive process between the individual and the host culture (Berry, 1993). According to Mendoza and Martinez (1981) acculturation is also situation specific and individuals may act differently at school versus home. As it relates to Latina/o students, exposure to multiple cultures and new experiences at the university may either solidify or threaten a students functioning (Ethier & Deaux, 1990). Some of these students may experience acculturative stress and/or conflicts regarding their cultural orientation when exposed to other Latinos who may have different values and attitudes than their own (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000).
While the psychological and cultural dimensions of the PCS framework are important in understating Latinos experiences in higher education, the current study is primarily interested in the social dimension, specifically in examining the role of the family in providing support to their first generation college student. Consequently the interview questions will focus on family support the student received from family members as well as the family support provided by the parents to their college student.

**Latinos in Higher Education**

Until recently, much of the research on Latinos in educational contexts focused on elementary and secondary education, and examined topics of bilingual education, immigration, and dropouts (Brown, Santiago, & Lopez, 2003). However, interest in research regarding Latina/os in higher education has recently gained momentum. This is a much needed development, as the number of Latina/o students entering colleges and universities has increased and is likely to continue to increase. According to Brown (2008), this interest becomes especially apparent given the emergence in the last ten years of a journal focused specifically on this group of students, the Journal of Hispanic Higher Education. This journal appears to reflect a particular focus on gaining a better understanding of the type of institutions in which these Latina/o college students are enrolling, how many are completing their degrees, and what types of degrees are being obtained. However, it is noteworthy that relatively little research is being conducted concerning the nature of retention of Latina/o students in higher education.

In a 20-year span from 1980 to 2000, Latina/o student college enrollment increased by 6%, from 16 to 22% of the Latino population (Llagas, 2003). Despite this
increase in college enrollment among Latina/os, there continues to be a wide gap between the enrollment of Latina/os and their white student counterparts (Brown et al., 2003; Llagas, 2003). Moreover, the rate of Latina/os completing degrees in higher education institutions lags behind White students. In the year 2000, Latina/os earned 10% of bachelor’s degrees or higher compared to 36% of bachelor’s degrees or higher earned by White students.

While more Latinas/os are enrolling in institutions of higher education, a disproportionate percentage of these students are enrolling at community colleges. In fact, during the 2000-2001 academic school year, more than half (57.7%) of those Latina/os enrolled at college attended community colleges (Harvey, 2003). This trend is true for students of color, in that, in 2008, they made up 37% of all students attending 2-year institutions versus 27% of the student body at 4-year institutions (Kim, 2011). The number of associate’s degrees earned by Latina/os has increased dramatically, more than 135% between 1990 and 2000 (Harvey, 2003). While these statistics appear promising, the reality is that it is not enough. According to Cohen and Brawer (2003), it appears that, for Latinas/os, community colleges are seen as the gateway to higher education. Unfortunately, those students that enroll in 2-year institutions of higher education in most cases will not transfer to a 4-year institution, will not complete a bachelor’s degree, or even an associate’s degree. In the end, many will leave having completed some courses at their local community college without ever finishing a degree program (Evans, 2009).

The attraction of attending community college may be that it affords the individual the opportunity to stay closer to home and to save money. According to
Gandara, Horn & Orfield, (2005), the cost of tuition at 4-year universities has increased dramatically and may be a contributing factor in deciding what college/university to attend. In addition to the high cost of attending a university, Latina/os on average tend to have lower family incomes, making the option of attending a university less likely. While many do not see attending community college as the end to their educational endeavors, the reality is that most will never transfer to a 4-year institution.

Recent enrollment statistics from 2008 released by the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) on public research institutions indicate that, with the exception of Asian/Pacific Islanders, who comprise 24.5% of enrollment, Whites are enrolled at public research institutions at a higher rate (21.6%) than Blacks (13.8%), Latinos (13%) and American Indians (17%) (Aud, Fox, & Kewal Ramini, 2010). It is clear from these statistics that students of color (with the exception of Asian/Pacific Islander students), including Latina/os, are disproportionately low in attending 4-year colleges and universities compared to their White counterparts. Only a small percentage of students that begin at a community college with the intentions of transferring to a 4-year college will accomplish their educational goals. According to Solorzano, Rivas, and Velez (2005), among 71% of Latina/o community college students who showed interest in transferring and pursuing a bachelor’s degree, only 20% actually transferred to 4-year institutions of higher education.

Researchers have concluded that students who initially enroll in 4-year institutions have much better educational outcomes and will more likely graduate with a degree (Fry, 2004). In other words, it has been suggested that if Latina/o students were to
enroll in 4-year institutions instead of using community colleges as a steppingstone, perhaps more would ultimately graduate with a bachelor’s degree. While this may hold some truth, the reality is that the reasons why Latina/os do not go directly to a 4-year institution after high school graduation are complex. Many Latina/o students may not be prepared to enter a university upon graduating from high school. Recent studies have found that low income and minority students are receiving very little college guidance and related information in their high schools (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Lack of college guidance in high school, in addition to inadequate academic preparation, may leave many students lacking the educational requirements needed for entry into 4-year institutions. Furthermore, lack of awareness of the educational system in the U.S. by parents of Latina/o students may add to this dilemma. This lack of awareness and knowledge about the educational system may interfere with parents’ ability to guide their children and, specifically to make sure they are taking the courses needed to be able to apply to 4-year colleges. This is not to suggest that parents are not interested in their sons and daughters pursuing a college degree; but, rather, that their unfamiliarity with the educational system in the U.S., hinders their ability to do so. Researchers have emphasized the importance of parents providing instrumental knowledge (factual and procedural knowledge to enter and succeed in higher education) to their children in order to prepare them to succeed in college (Hurtado & Sinah, 2006). According to Hurtado and Sinah (2006), research has strongly supported the idea that educated parents are better prepared to “instruct, support, and otherwise encourage their offspring to succeed in higher education” (p. 151).
Given the limited number of Latina/o students who enroll in 4-year colleges and universities, it is imperative that researchers become invested in understanding how to increase the number of Latina/o students enrolling and then graduating from these institutions.

The present study is interested in learning more about Latina/o first generation college students attending 4-year colleges, primarily because it will add to the limited research that currently exists on this topic. Furthermore, it will help shed light on the role family has on the adjustment and support of these first time college students. Given that too few Latina/o students go to a 4-year institution following high school graduation, it is imperative that researchers begin to understand what factors contribute to and interfere with their persistence in completing their degrees. Understanding the role of the family and related family support on the adjustment to college among first generation Latina/o college students may be one factor that contributes significantly to adjustment to college and ultimately to degree completion.

First Generation College Students

The simplest definition of a first generation college student, according to Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008), is being the first in the immediate family to attend college. Other definitions of first generation college students include the Trio programs’ (i.e., federally funded educational outreach programs that provide support for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds) definition that describes these students as having neither parent complete a 4-year college degree. Finally, the National Center of Education defines a first generation college student as an individual who is the first in her
or his family to pursue a degree beyond high school, where no one in previous
generations has attended college, with the exception of any siblings who may have
attended college (NCES, 2006).

These definitions are important because an additional barrier faced by many
Latino/a college students is that of being the first in their family to attend a college or
university. Researchers have begun to explore the characteristics of these students in an
effort to better understand the barriers that prevent them from entering colleges. One of
the implications of being the first in the family to attend college is that the parents have
low educational attainment, and will therefore not have the “college knowledge” to guide
their children toward that path. A recent study on incoming Latina/o freshman at 4-year
institutions indicated that Latina/os were more likely than their college and university
peers to have parents with lower levels of educational attainment (Saenz, Hurtado,
Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007). This same trend has been documented elsewhere for
more than three decades (Saenz et al., 2007). The U.S. Department of Education’s
National Education Longitudinal Study found that students whose parents did not go to
college or earn a college degree were less likely to attend college themselves. In fact,
only 47% of those students enrolled in college, compared to 85% of their peers who had
parents with a college degree (NELS, 1988). Consistent with this, Saenz et al.(2007)
report that there has been a decline in the number of first generation college students over
a 35 year period from 1971 to 2005, from 38.5% to 15.9%. The percentage of first
generation college students attending public institutions was 17.5% (Saenz et al., 2007).
This decline is attributed to the increase in educational attainment among the U.S.
population as well as an increase in the number of students who are attending 2-year institutions upon high school graduation. While all racial/ethnic groups have experienced a decline in proportion of first-generation students enrolling in college, Latinos continue to be more likely than their peers to be first-generation accounting for more than one third of the students (38.2%) (Saenz et al., 2007).

It is important to note that the statistical trend reported by Saenz et al. (2007) utilized survey data collected by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program’s (CIRP) Freshman Survey from 1971-2005. While the number of students who are the first in their family to attend college has decreased among all groups since 1971, Latinos continue to have the largest proportion of first generation college students among all first generation college students in 2005 (38.2%), followed by African Americans (22.6%); Asian Americans (19%), Native Americans and White (13.2%) (Saenz et al., 2007). Additionally, Saenz et al. point to a much slower proportional decline of first-generation Latina/o college students since 1971, which they attribute to limited overall gain in access to 4-year institutions. In contrast to these statistical findings, White students continue to be less likely to be first-generation, but also represent a large proportion of all entering first-generation college students, given their numerical majority within the entering college student population at 4-year institutions (Saenz et al., 2007). Given that Latina/os represent the highest percentage of first generation college students at 4-year institutions, more research is needed to learn about this population and how to better serve these students and guide them to successfully complete their degrees.
Looking beyond 4-year college institutions, Hurtado, Han, Saenz, Espinosa, Cabrera & Cerna, (2007) also looked at the U.S. population with no college education between 1975 and 2005. Similar to the findings among first generation college students, there was a decline in the last 30 years of individuals 25 and older who had no college education. In this time span the number of non-college educated Whites decreased from 72.8% to 42.8%. The number of non-college educated Latinos decreased from 85% to 69.1% (Saenz et al., 2007). It is clear from these statistics that Latina/os continue to be at a disadvantage when it comes to being college educated. Furthermore in this same 30 year time period, decline among first-generation college students that are White was 55.4% compared to 37.8% of Latina/os. Once again we are reminded that Latina/os are very slowly improving their representation in institutions of higher education and consequently deserve more attention by researchers, given that the slow rate of decline suggests a growing gap (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

As it relates to parental education among Latino males and Latina females attending 4-year institutions, there is a difference in educational attainment between the genders. These differences are that Latino male college students are reporting higher levels of educational attainment for both of their parents when compared to the parents of their Latina female counterparts (Hurtado Saenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008). Additionally, as of 2006, CIRP data show that Latina mothers overall have surpassed Latino fathers in educational attainment. This is an interesting finding according to Saenz and Ponjuan (2009). “If we subscribe to the notion that parental education predicts access to enhanced educational opportunities” (p. 70), it would follow that Latino male college students
would be entering 4-year college institutions at a higher rate than Latina females, but this is not the case. The enrollment data collected through the CIRP Freshman Survey indicate that the proportion of Latino males entering 4-year institutions decreased from 57.4% in 1975 to 39% in 2006 while that of Latina females increased from 42.6% in 1975 to 61% in 2006 (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Latina female college students attending 4-year institutions, then, are overcoming the greater educational shortcomings of their parents in order to achieve educationally as compared to Latino males (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

In a recent qualitative study that looked at first generation Latina students’ educational experiences and coping responses, an overarching theme that emerged was the fundamental and complex role that the family plays for first generation Latina students (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). While many of the students indicated that their families initially questioned them about their decision to leave home and showed concern about their pursuing this unfamiliar path, ultimately the families developed support for and pride in their daughters. Similarly, the participants reported that their success hinged largely upon their ability to balance family and school responsibilities (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). While these same findings might also apply to Latino males, they were not included in this qualitative study, so no such conclusions can be drawn with any confidence.

**Latino Cultural Influences on Education**

A cultural value that is prominent among Latina/os is that of familismo, which involves a strong connection and identification with one’s immediate and extended
family. This value has been described as strong feelings of loyalty, responsibility and solidarity within the Latino family unit (Marin & Marin, 1991). Perhaps it is the notion of loyalty and obligation that some males translate into a desire to contribute financially to their families in a more immediate sense. Furthermore, while there is much research that indicates the financial value of a 4-year degree across one’s career (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), economic exigencies may override the desire or ability to engage in such long-term planning. Therefore, the desire to contribute financially because of familismo may be magnified when one belongs to a low-income family. Consequently Latina/os may be faced with the difficult choice of postponing college to work full time and help the family financially.

Other cultural values that affect Latina/os are those of obedience, *respeto* as well as being well educated *bien educado*. Many Latina/o parents try to instill *respeto* in their childrens’ interpersonal skills. *Respeto* refers to respect for authority (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). According to Diaz-Guerrero (1975) *respeto* means emotionalized dependence and dutifulness to the family. Within the family dynamics, the status of the parents is high and that of the children is low (Falicov, 1998). Furthermore, the authority of parents is unquestioned throughout life and only lessens slightly during adulthood (Clark & Mendelson, 1975). Young adults that grow up in families that adhere to this cultural value of *respeto* may find it difficult to pursue higher education and/or leave home to attend college when parents are not supportive of their decisions. Related to *respeto* is the cultural value of being well educated, *bien educado*. However, *bien educado*, refers to learning “adequate social graces and skills” and not being rude or
spoiled or lacking respect (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). The values of respect and being bien educado extend beyond the parent-child relationship and can be applied to individuals that hold a place of authority such as elders, professors, counselors, doctors and teachers. For example, not disrespecting, no faltarle el respeto is a “golden rule that children and adults abide by” towards those in authority roles and includes not raising one’s voice, not talking back, not asserting oneself and using formal Spanish, usted, when necessary (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002).

According to Santiago-Rivera and colleagues (2002) there is a debate on the extent to which Latinos continue to uphold traditional gender roles once in the United States. Traditional gender roles may be undergoing a transformation especially as Latino families adapt/acculturate in the U.S. According to Espin (1999) traditional gender roles may be more apparent among recent immigrants and may be influenced by factors including socioeconomic status, level of education, place of residency, migration experience, language and family composition (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002).

For Latina/os, gender socialization brings forth the concepts of marianismo (referring to female gender role) and machismo (referring to the male gender role). Marianismo refers to the idea of the Latina woman as a Madonna, specifically the Virgin Mary, who is “submissive, self sacrificing, religious humble and modest” (Falicov, 1998, p. 199). Marianismo, also has implications regarding a woman’s sexuality which mandates that she should remain a virgin until marriage, and also not have much knowledge or enjoyment regarding sexual relations (Falicov, 1998; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2002). Additionally, marianismo also encompasses positive aspects, such as a woman’s
ability to be a “giving and generous mother,” someone who is “respected and revered by family and community” (Falicov, 1998, p. 200). Machismo refers to the well known cultural icon of the Latino man as physically strong, virile, and of indomitable character (Falicov, 1998). The notion of the Latino male as “macho” is often seen as a negative characteristic. According to Morales (1996), “the Anglo-American definition of macho describes a sexist, male chauvinist behavior which is very different from the original meaning of machismo which describes an honorable and responsible man” (p. 274). Furthermore, it refers to the responsibility of a man as provider, protector and defender of his family (Morales, 1996).

For Latina young adults, the decision to attend college and move away from home may go against the traditional gender role expectation to stay at home until marriage. According to Falicov (1998), leaving home to go to college may be limited for many Latinos. Leaving the home for other reasons other than marriage may have some negative consequences. For example, a Latina female who is college educated and decides to move into an apartment may be seen as disgraceful by family or the woman may be frowned upon (Falicov, 1998). The decision to pursue education and move away from home is exemplified in the lived experience of Veronica Orozco (2003) who describes this decision as “culturally unacceptable, leaving home for school” (p. 129). Furthermore, when discussing moving out of state to pursue her education, her mother persuaded her not to move so far away and was ultimately advised by her father to attend a university closer to home. Ultimately she was accepted and enrolled at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) mainly because it was the university her brother was attending (Orozco,
For her parents knowing that her brother was at the same university gave them peace of mind and she describes them being relieved when she told them she would be attending UCI (Orozco, 2003). It is possible that Latino parents continue to struggle with the idea of their daughters moving out of the home before marriage. This may limit Latina’s options of attending colleges and universities of their choice and create additional barriers to succeed in college.

Gender role expectations among Latino males provide further explanatory power regarding why some may not pursue higher education. In a particular reference to Latino males, Morales (1996) stated that, culturally, a male’s responsibility is to “provide for, protect and defend his family” (p. 274). Furthermore, when taking into consideration the continued flow of Latino immigrants into the U.S., those that arrive in their late adolescence are not coming for educational opportunities; instead they come seeking work. According to Saenz and Ponjuan (2009), a combination of “social, familial and socio-economic pressures” may contribute to Latino males entering the workforce at an earlier age than their female counterparts and consequently cause them to pass on pursuing a college education (p. 63).

Another culture-specific influence that Latina/o undergraduates encounter upon entering college is what is known as acculturative stress. Acculturative stress has been defined by Berry (1980) as the difficulties and stressors that occur while an individual is undergoing the acculturative process. Undergraduate Latina/o students are likely undergoing just such a process when they enter the university and are faced with an unfamiliar setting, with relatively few people from their own culture. Belonging to an
ethnic minority group creates stress in higher education due to “negative expectations” that their White peers and faculty may have (Castellanos & Jones, 2003, p. 6).

Furthermore having others question their presence at institutions of higher education or believing they got in to fill a quota or as a result of affirmative action undermines their academic strengths (Castellanos & Jones, 2003).

**College Transition and Adjustment Among Latinas/os**

The study of college adjustment by many researchers stems from a desire to understand the attrition of college students during the first two years of college. It is believed that many of the students that leave college during the first two years of college without earning a degree is a result of unsuccessfully navigating the transition to college and consequently failing to adequately adjust to college life (Hurtado et al., 1996). In their review of the college adjustment literature, Hurtado et al. (1996) report that there is no singular definition of college adjustment. College adjustment has been defined by Chartrand (1992) as having “institutional commitment, feelings of academic adjustment and the absence of psychological distress” (p. 137). Bennett and Okinaka (1990) describe adjustment as the relative absence of a level of alienation students experience when they are unfamiliar with the norms, values, and expectations that predominate the setting.

Some commonalities found in studies that focus on college adjustment include psychological distress or the lack of psychological distress, as well as the students’ personal, social and academic adjustments (Hurtado et al., 1996). A study by Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993) conceptualized adjustment as a function of students’ attributes, as well as how students cope with psychological and sociocultural stresses. Furthermore,
Smedley et al. (1993) report that ethnic minorities also face additional stressors that go beyond what is typical for the average student. These stressors include experiences of discrimination and interracial conflicts, as well as a negative campus climate (Smedley et al., 1993).

It is possible to gain a deeper understanding of what college adjustment is by taking into consideration the measures that are used to determine this process. One of the common measures used in quantitative studies on adjustment use the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) which measures overall student adjustment and has four main scales that measure academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and attachment (Baker & Siryk, 1984, 1989). Baker and Siryk (1984, 1989) describe the four main scales as follows: (a) academic adjustment measures students’ attitudes and motivation toward their academic work, and how satisfied they are about their program; (b) social adjustment measures involvement in social activities, success with interpersonal relationships, and satisfaction with the social environment; (c) personal-emotional adjustment measures psychological health of students, specifically, how well students respond to stress, as well as a physical manifestations of dealing with academic pressures; and (d) attachment refers to the degree a student feels that they belong in their institution.

Some Latina/o student behaviors were found to be positively associated with adjustment, which suggest that there are experiences that will make it easier to successfully adjust to college by students (Hurtado et al., 1996). Managing time, money and schedules as well as perceiving schoolwork as manageable were associated with
academic and personal-emotional adjustment. Maintaining family support was positively associated with personal-emotion adjustment. Interactions with faculty were associated with academic adjustments. The time students spent socializing with friends during the first year, was positively associated with social adjustment. Furthermore, it was found that resident advisors, academic counselors, and an upper class students all had a positive influences on student adjustment to the institution. Additional findings by Hurtado et al. (1996) were that the perception of racial/ethnic tension was related to lower levels of personal-emotional adjustment and attachment to the institution. It was also found that experiences that occur while in college affect the adjustment process more than student background characteristics. Finally, students who were able to separate from family while maintaining family relationships and support had better personal-emotional adjustment (Hurtado et al., 1996)

While measures such as the SACQ are able to point to areas that are important in the adjustment process they lack the rich details to truly understand the complexity of the adjustment process. Furthermore, given that Latinas/os deal with additional stressors when adjusting, obtaining their perspectives and hearing their voices regarding this process is of great importance to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what their experience was in the adjustment process. Consequently the present qualitative study aims to give readers a much richer and descriptive account of the process of adjustment and the role that family plays in this process.

In regards to the transition to college among Latina/o college students, Hutado et al. (1996) included open-ended questions to assess students’ perceptions of the
challenges, support and climate issues during the transition process. Responses to the open-ended questions indicated the most difficult part of their first year college experience was academic adjustment, accounting for 31% of responses. According to the students, getting use to the difficulty and amount of work, not getting good grades, and no longer being at the top of their class were among the top concerns related to transition to college. Maintaining social relationships and establishing social relationships accounted for 22% of responses and were the second most difficult parts of the first year of college as reported by students. This included relationships with peers, family and friends and included feeling “homesick,” “separation from family and friends,” and “being accepted” by peers on campus as well as finding a support group (Hurtado et al., 1996, p. 149). The third most popular difficulty reported by students was time management, and accounted for 20% of responses. Other transition difficulties included campus environment issues with ethnic/cultural adjustment. Feeling that people on campus were cold and less caring, being treated as inferior by others because of ethnicity, realizing that the system was biased against their ethnicity.

Research conducted by Nora and Cabrera (1996) points to the importance of maintaining ties with significant others (including family and past communities) for a successful transition from high school to college among Latinos. Similarly, Hurtado et al. (1996) reported that “maintaining quality student-parent relationships as well as adequate personal autonomy are more influential in the transition process” (p. 153). Other significant findings regarding the adjustment of Latina/os in college indicate that self esteem and peer support were related to the college adjustment of Latina females and self
estee was related to the college adjustment for Latino males (Toews, Yazedjian, 2007). Interestingly this study found no significance for parental support or parental education related to Latina/o students’ adjustment to college (Toews, Yazedjian, 2007). Self esteem was found to be the strongest predictor of overall adjustment (Toews, Yazejidian, 2007). In a quantitative study on Latina/o college students conducted by Alvan, Belgrave and Zea (1996), it was found that perceived availability of support led to better college adjustment. Specifically emotional forms of support such as advice, encouragement and opportunities to socialize from both family and friends were critical instead of instrumental forms of support (such as material and physical aid) for a successful college experience (Alvan et al., 1996). These researchers suggest that for Latino students a combination of support form both family and friends is more appropriate for adjustment and success in college. Another study that looked into the role of social support and stress on college adjustment among Latino college students found that academic stress, social stress and perceived availability of social support accounted for 59% of the variance in college adjustment (Solberg, Valdez, & Villarreal, 1994). From the research discussed above, it is clear that social support has an important role in the adjustment to college for many students. Particularly for Latina/o students, social support received from family also plays a crucial role in the adjustment process. It is important that we understand the type of support that Latino parents provide their college students, how the support is experienced by the student, and ultimately how it may contribute to the transition and adjustment to college.
Gender Trends

Contrary to what some would assume regarding gender differences in the attainment of higher education degrees, recent studies have indicated that Latina females are entering and graduating from institutions of higher education at a higher rate than their male counterparts. However, prior to the 1970’s, Latino men were making the greater educational advances and leaving women behind. The tides shifted in the mid 1970’s in favor of Latina women, who, according to Contreras and Gandara (2006), accounted for the gains in educational advancement, while Latino males had made little educational progress since the mid 1970s. The gains in education can be measured by the percentage of bachelor’s degrees earned by Latinas compared to Latinos between 1985 to 2000 (NCES, 2002). For example, in the year 2000, the percentage of Latinas (25-29 years old) with a bachelor’s degree was 11% compared to 8.3% among their Latino counterpart (NCES, 2002). It is important to note that the trend of more educational progress for females is true across all ethnic groups, but most prominent among Latinas and African Americans (Contreras & Gandara, 2006).

Supporting this trend are statistics from the National Center of Education, in the conclusion is forwarded that fewer college age men are entering college than in the past and that the gap between degrees conferred to males and females is also widening (NCES, 2005). Furthermore, the National Center of Education data indicate that males are not keeping up with females in their same age group across all levels of education, as well as across all racial and ethnic groups (NCES, 2005).
The finding that males in general are struggling to enter and persist in institutions of higher education is particularly alarming when one considers the low number of Latinos in higher education. Past research on Latinos have found that males are more likely to drop out of high school and find employment instead of entering college, and are also more likely to leave college prior to degree attainment (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005).

In an attempt to understand the complexity of why Latino males are less likely than Latina females in pursuing higher education, Saenz and Pojuan (2009) have highlighted the ways in which a combination of social stigma, structural inequalities, and peer and cultural pressures work together to influence young Latino males in their educational decisions and experiences. For example, there is a lack of Latino males in the teaching workforce that could possibly provide as role models to Latino males and help them navigate through the educational system (Saenz & Pojuan, 2009).

**Family Encouragement and Support**

There has been a positive association established in the research between parental encouragement and postsecondary educational plans (Conklin & Dailey, 1981; Hossler & Stage, 1992). As noted earlier, a strong relationship has also been established between a family’s socioeconomic status and the amount of parental encouragement that children receive. Research by Carpenter and Fleishman (1987) indicates that greater prestige on the father’s occupation and higher parental educational levels (Hossler & Stage, 1992) resulted in more encouragement to pursue college among their children. As cited in Ceja (2004), low educational attainment among Latino families, does not “translate into lower
levels of encouragement and expectation by parents” (p. 340). Supporting these findings are studies by Gandara (1995), Ovando (1977), and Perez (1999) that show that despite their low socioeconomic status, Mexican parents have high educational aspirations for their children. These findings are in contrast to theories such as the cultural deficit model (Valencia, 1997) which ultimately blames the victim, by attributing the low academic achievement of Latina/o children to family factors including parenting styles and not valuing or involving themselves in their children’s education.

The literature on the role of family support in the education of Latina/o college student has been mixed. One study found that family support was not related to college adjustment for Hispanic males or females (Toews & Yazedjian, 2007). In another study, family support was found to be related to college adjustment in some Latina/o college students (Phinney, Dennis, & Gutierrez, 2005). Ong, Phinney, and Dennis (2006) found that academic achievement was linked to both individual and family level influences and contributed to the academic success of Latinas/os with low socioeconomic status. Additionally, it was found the “persistent levels of parental support on education were accompanied by elevations in GPA and performance” of students supporting the positive relationship between parental support and college adjustment (Ong et al., 2006, p. 973). In a study that looked at who played a greater supportive role for Latina/o college students, it was found that perceived support from family and friends both contributed to feelings of well-being among the college students (Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2003). Support from friends was a slightly greater in contributing to well-being than perceived support from family (Rodriguez, et al., 2003). Support from friends was
also found to be protective against psychological distress (Rodriguez et al., 2003). According to Rodriguez et al. (2003), it may be that college students rely on their college friends for support in coping with college related stress and that family may be a source of support for non-college stresses.

There is also some research that suggests that parents play an important role in influencing their children’s aspirations and educational goals. In a qualitative study of Chicana students by Ceja (2004), it was found that all of the participants in the study discussed the important role their parents had on their educational aspirations and success. According to Falicov (1998) the term Chicana/o refers to individuals of Mexican decent who were born in the U.S. and who identify with the indigenous roots of their Mexican ancestry. The Chicana students that participated in the study reported that their parents held strong values regarding a college education and directly and indirectly conveyed messages to their children (Ceja, 2004). Despite not having formal education, no personal experience with the U.S. educational system, and many lacking fluency in English, they understood that to achieve economic stability and mobility in the U.S. education was necessary (Ceja, 2004). While White middle-class educated families transmit messages about going to college based on personal experience, understanding the educational system as well as established social networks, Mexican parents influence the “educational pathways of their children” based on their “economic, social and occupational struggles” (Ceja, 2004, p. 346). In an attempt to motivate their daughters towards higher education, the parents would discuss the economic difficulties of earning minimum wage, working in a factory and getting paid a low wage, getting married too early and not graduating
from high school as well as the limited opportunities for individuals without an education (Ceja, 2004).

Research conducted by Nora and Cabrera (1996) indicates that encouragement and support by parents was one of the three factors that contributed to Latina/os decisions to remain in college even when there was a negative perception of discrimination and prejudice on campus. Furthermore, parental encouragement and words of support were found to have a positive effect on integration into college and academic performance, as well as on the desire to remain in college (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). In a study by Schneider and Ward (2003), family support was the only support measure to “uniquely predict Latinos’ overall emotional and academic adjustment” (p. 550).

Responses to open ended questions in a study by Hurtado et al. (1996) indicate that family was influential in providing support during their freshman year, and accounted for 28% of responses. The most influential in providing support were college peers which accounted for 38% of responses Hurtado et al. (1996). College peers included in the responses were upperclass students, roommates, other freshman as well as residence hall staff. Family members identified as being involved in providing support included immediate family, parents and siblings as well as a more general response of “family.” Responses regarding family support included “they stood behind me in all that I did and helped when they could” as well as “they assure me that it was a worthwhile sacrifice” (Hurtado et al., 1996, p. 150). Responses to these open ended questions provide insight regarding the struggles that students experience as they transition and adjust to college life. The use of qualitative data in this study uncovered an unanticipated finding
that the support that family provides is key for the transition process (Hurtado et al., 1996).

In conclusion, the literature on Latinos in institutions of higher education show an increase in the number of Latina/os enrolling in colleges and universities in the U.S. Despite this increase, Latina/os continue to be underrepresented especially in 4-year institutions pointing to disparities in the number of students who enroll and ultimately graduate with a bachelors degree (Kim, 2011). Consequently, researchers must engage in exploring factors that contribute to the retention of Latina/o students who do enroll in these institutions. One factor that may aid in the retention of Latina/o college student is awareness of first-generation college students. Latinas/os continue to be more likely than their peers to be first in their family to attend college (Saenz et al., 2007).

These first-generation Latina/o students bring with them unique needs. Some researchers that looked at first generation college Latina students have found the complex role that the family plays for these students (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Furthermore, a desire to help family has been found to contribute to reasons why Latina/os enroll in college and has served as a motivator for some students (Fuligni et al. 1999; Phinney et al., 2006). Given the importance of family among Latina/os and that familismo is a strong cultural value (Marin & Marin, 1991), it would follow that it would play an important role during the transition and adjustment to college. Research on the role of family support on college adjustment has found that maintaining family support is positively associated with personal-emotional adjustment (Hurtado et al., 1996). Successful transition from high school to college was related to maintaining ties with
family and past communities as well as maintaining quality relationships with their parents (Hurtado et al., 1996; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Finally there have been some mixed findings regarding the role of family support on Latina/o college students. Exploring the role family support among first generation college students merits further attention. Specifically understanding if any type of support is being provided to first-generation college students by their parents. If so what does this support look like and how does it contribute to the adjustment to college.

As Latinas/os continue to be an ever increasing presence in colleges and universities in the United States, these institutions of higher education must be better prepared to deal with the unique challenges that these students bring. In addition to working towards increasing the number of Latinas/os that enroll in 4-year institutions, taking steps to retain the students that are currently enrolled would help increase the number of students who persist and ultimately graduate with a bachelors degree. In line with these goals would be gaining a better understanding of the factors that help Latina/o students transition to and adjust to college. The present study aims to help in this process, to gain insight into the role that family support plays in the transition and adjustment to college via a qualitative study.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The following methodology section provides an overview of the design, data collection and analysis that will be used in the present study. In particular this section highlights the multiple case study design, the cases that will be selected, the types of data that were collected, how the data was analyzed, the validation strategies used, ethical issues that arised as well as the role and background of the researcher. The overall multiple case study design will be presented. The case selection includes demographics of the participants for both the student and their parents. Including age, sex, and education level. The data collected consisted of the construction of a family genogram, joint parent interview, student interview, and reflective journal. A discussion of the validation strategies included triangulation, rich thick data, reflective journal and member checking. This section ends with the discussion of possible ethical concerns as well as the role and background of the researcher.

Research Design

This study is qualitative in nature and uses a case study methodology. According to Creswell (2013, p. 97), a case study is “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system” or systems (or a case or cases) over time “through detailed in-depth data collection” that involves multiple sources of information. Similarly, Yin (2009) defines a case study as “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident”
Thus, the case study approach uses multiple sources of evidence to converge in a triangulating fashion (Yin, 2003). Both Yin (2009) and Creswell (2013) state that case studies may involve a single case or multiple cases.

For the present case study, the bounded system consists of first generation Latina/o college students that are currently enrolled in a 4-year university and have completed at least one quarter of their freshman year. Specifically, this study selected multiple cases in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of family support in the participants’ college adjustment. A second goal of this study was to compare male and female participants and note any similarities and differences in their experiences of family support. Third, this study also investigated the psychosociocultural dimensions of family support processes. The parent(s) of the participants were also recruited to participate in this study as sources of triangulation of data. Parent participation in this study, by serving as an additional source of data, also provided deeper insight into these participants’ provisions of support. Ultimately, then parental input aided in obtaining in-depth understanding of the role of family support in the process of college adjustment of the Latino students representing the multiple cases of this investigation.

As noted previously, a multiple case study requires multiple sources of information. The sources of information of this investigation consisted of the college student interviews, parent(s) interviews, family genograms, and the researcher’s observation notes and reflective journal. These sources of information were thoroughly analyzed and, taken in combination, and provided the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the role that family support plays for the students of the study in their
transitions and adjustments to college. Furthermore, this multiple case study research
analysis followed a within-case analysis followed by a cross-case analysis and ends with
assertions (Creswell, 2013).

When conducting a multiple case study, it is suggested that the number of cases
be limited to no more than four or five (Creswell, 2013). Having too many cases would
interfere with the ability to obtain depth in any one case. Having four to five cases
allowed the researcher to identify common themes among each of the cases and then
conduct a cross-case theme analysis (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, it is important to
note that in a multiple case study the goal is not generalizability as it is in a quantitative
study; the goal is to gain an in-depth, rich understanding of each case and of the
phenomena being studied. In a multiple case study, the notion of purposeful sampling is
often practiced, where cases are chosen that will represent different perspectives of the
area being studied. In purposeful sampling, Creswell (2013) states that the researcher
selects individuals that can purposefully inform an understanding of the research
phenomena in the study. For the present study, keeping purposeful sampling in mind, I
proposed to recruit four first generation Latina/o college students, two male and two
female, and their respective parent(s) to help understand the role of support (support
given by parents and the students’ experience of receiving support) during the transition
and adjustment to college.

The focus on Latina/o first generation college students stems from a desire to shed
light on this at-risk population. While more Latinos are enrolling in 4-year universities,
too many do not complete their degrees. Additionally, being the first in the family to
attend college brings with it additional barriers and challenges. These barriers and challenges may hinder students in their attempts to successfully integrate into and adjust to college. In choosing a combination of male and female college students, I am selected cases that provided at least two perspectives, that of female first generation college students as well as male first generation college students. It is possible that males and females receive and experience support differently from their families. As noted previously, the parents of these students were also recruited to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of support. Having these multiple sources of information allowed me to gain more in-depth information about support. I was able to describe the type of support being received by students and the type of support being provided by the parents. In doing so, I ultimately obtained a more holistic understanding of the support, itself, and ultimately gain an understanding of the role support plays in the lives of college students and their respective families.

**Case Selection**

For the present case study, participants were recruited via a list serve for students who are attending a west coast university. All participants met the following criteria: first generation Latina/o college student having completed a minimum of one quarter in their first year of undergraduate schooling; an even number of males and females; two parents, self-identified as Latino/ Hispanic; students can be born in the U.S. or outside; traditional-aged college students; enrolled in a 4-year institution of higher education after graduating from high school. For clarification purposes, in this study a traditional college student was defined as a student who has not attended college previously and who enters
college after high school graduation. Additionally, participants whose parents were willing to be interviewed as part of the study were able to participate. The decision to have participants who have completed at minimum one quarter of their first year of college was made so that they can reflect upon their experience of having left home and being on campus as a college student. Specifically, the focus was on their adjustment and the support they may have received from their family during their college adjustment. As stated above, these students were recruited by the researcher through e-mail list serves. The students were asked to reply to the researcher if they are interested in participating in the study, but only if they meet the selection criteria. Once I have found four participants, two males and two females, who are willing to take part in the study and whose parents have also confirmed their own interest in participating, the family unit was confirmed as participants. In the present study each family unit made up a case. Each of these family cases included two separate interviews the student interview and the parental dyad interview. The parents were interviewed together. Prior to data collection, both the student and their parents were be asked to fill out a research consent form in the language of their preference. As noted previously, I was looking for both male and female first generation college students in order to gain different perspectives on their adjustment and the support received from family members during their first year of college.

The focus on first generation Latino college students is needed to provide insight to service providers and colleges about the unique circumstances that first generation students face when entering college. Given that Latinos are family oriented, this study provides insight into how the family and the student navigate the transition to college and
the role that support plays in this process. Once the researcher confirmed the participation of the four students and their respective parents, and they signed the consent forms, the recruitment phase of the study came to an end.

**Data Collection**

**Interviews.** The data collection process consisted of interviewing the students and their parents separately. Participants were asked to fill out a consent form and were informed that they were allowed to withdraw from the study upon their request at any time during the study. Consent forms and any written materials and communications were available in Spanish, if needed. The student participated in a two-part interview, followed by the parental dyad interview, which the student did not participate in. During the first part of interview, the participants were asked to talk about their family, and their families’ educational background, as well as to establish the place of birth of the family members. The researcher used the information gathered during the first part of the interview to construct a family genogram. A family genogram is very similar to a family tree. This assessment tool was introduced to the field of counseling psychology by Monica McGoldrick. In her latest book, McGoldrick describes genograms as a “kind of annotated family tree” (McGoldrick, 2011, p. 33). It is often used in therapy by clinicians as an assessment tool, as a means to collect information, to generate hypotheses, and to track relationships regarding their client (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985; McGoldrick, Gerson, & Shellenberger, 1999). Constructing a genogram was a helpful tool when moving on to the second part of the interview, as well as to the parent interview. It enabled the interviewer to be able to better understand who the participant is
talking about in their family when discussing family support. The student interview was conducted in an office on campus in order to offer the student easy access and to provide a private environment where she/he felt comfortable being interviewed. The parental dyad interview was conducted in the parents’ homes in the language of their choosing. The decision to interview the parents together was made with the anticipation that one parent may feed of the other when describing their provision of support to their son/daughter. If this were the case, then it would maximize the information provided by the parents. A possible drawback to having both parents interviewed together could be that one parent may dominate the discussion and not allow the other to participate freely. In an attempt to diminish this possibility the researcher used her couple clinical skills to balance the participation of both parents. In the event that one parent is less verbose than the other then the researcher directed the less verbose participant to discuss their experience.

Given that some parents may be monolingual (Spanish) or more proficient in Spanish than English, the researcher had some interviews conducted in Spanish and others in English. In order to keep the integrity and true voice of the participants, this researcher decided to complete the analysis and interpretation of the data in the language it was collected, and only translate the codes when creating themes. This data analytic method has been previously used when researching monolingual immigrant populations (e.g., Morales, 2008).

Each of the interviews took approximately one to one and a one-half hours. The interviews were audio recorded. Additionally, as mentioned previously, in order to put
the participants at ease, they had the option of being interviewed in English or Spanish. They were encouraged to choose the language in which they felt most comfortable expressing themselves. During the interviews the researcher took notes that captured some of the nonverbal material that was important to the understanding of the individual’s words.

**Reflective Journal**

Throughout the collection of data phase, the researcher kept a reflective journal in which she wrote about her thoughts throughout the study. Keeping this journal enabled the researcher to be aware of her thoughts, reactions, biases and any assumptions that were made. Additionally, it has been suggested that having a reflective journal will add rigor to the qualitative study (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Keeping a reflective journal adds rigor to the study because it allowed for transparency and accountability in how the data was collected and how the researcher arrived at themes. Furthermore the reflective journal also allowed the researcher to keep her own biases, thoughts and feelings in check through the data analysis process while listening to the voices of the participants. In addition to the reflective journal, the researcher also took field notes when conducting the interviews. These notes will be used as part of the data that will be gathered and will also undergo thorough analysis.

**Data Analysis**

Once the interviews were completed, the interviews, genograms, observation notes and journal entries were transcribed by the researcher prior to the data analysis in the language in which they were originally recorded. As noted earlier, the language was
kept in its original form in order to preserve the true essence of the data gathered and to prevent any loss of meaning during translation. These documents were put into separate files on Microsoft Word. These files were then be saved on the researcher’s personal computer and backed up on an external hard drive. Consistent with the dictates of the APA Publication Manual (APA, 2010), all research files will be retained for a minimum of five years.

After the interviews were transcribed they were coded for meaning by hand. The codes were grouped into similar categories and this process was repeated until themes emerged. In order to aid in organizing data and make it easily accessible for analyzing the cases, the software program Dedoose was used. The files in Dedoose were password protected and encrypted to maintain confidentiality. Ultimately using Dedoose made it easier to write the detailed descriptions of each case and was helpful in identifying the quotes used for each theme.

This multiple case study design involved various steps in data analysis. In analyzing a multiple case study, Creswell (2013) recommends beginning with a detailed description of each case followed by a within-case analysis, where the themes in each of the cases will be described. Once all the cases have been analyzed and the corresponding themes are described, the researcher then proceeded to complete a cross-case analysis. In the cross-case analysis, the themes found in each of the cases are analyzed across all the cases in the study. The final step in this multiple case analysis is the interpretation phase where the researcher makes assertions. In this last step, the researcher “reports the
meaning of the case”-- in other words what was learned about the issue in question in the case (Creswell, 2013, p. 101).

Validation Strategies

The topic of validity in qualitative research is one that is filled with multiple perspectives and can cause confusion, given that researchers use different terms for validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Despite the multiple perspectives on the topic of validity, there is agreement on the need to establish validity when conducting qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Validation strategies used by qualitative researchers, which are elaborated below, included triangulation, member checking, thick description, peer reviews and external audits. For the present study, the researcher used the following validation strategies: triangulation, thick, rich descriptions, researcher reflexivity, and member checking.

Stake (2006) describes triangulation as “the process of gaining assurance” (p. 33). He describes this as gaining assurance that the information that was interpreted from the cases is “supported by the data gathered and not misinterpreted by the reader” (Stake, 2006, p. 33). Other qualitative researchers, Creswell and Miller (2000), describe triangulation as a “validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (p. 126). As noted earlier, the present study used triangulation across data gathered via the participants interviews. A second validity strategy that was used in the present study was researcher reflexivity, in which the researcher self-discloses any biases, assumptions, beliefs, and values to the readers early in the research process. Being open with the
readers allows them to understand where the researcher stands on the issue being studied, but it also allowed the researcher to put those biases aside as the study continues. The researcher employed this validity strategy by keeping a reflexive journal, which was discussed earlier, and creating a section on the role of the researcher in the study through the data collection and analysis phase. The third type of validity strategy used in this study was thick, rich description. In using thick, rich description, the researcher allows the reader to “experience the events being described in the study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). In order to achieve this, the researcher provided as much detail as possible in describing important themes found.

The final validity strategy used was member checking, a process that involves taking the data back to the participants so they can provide feedback on the accuracy of the information presented in the results section. Once a near final draft of each case was written the case presentation along with the description of themes were sent to the student participants for review. They had an opportunity to review and correct anything that was inconsistent with their narrative. In the end three of the four college students gave me their feedback and it was incorporated as needed. Despite a number of communication attempts via phone and e-mails one of the female students did not provide any feedback. Obtaining feedback from the parents was more difficult given the language barrier. To achieve this the researcher scheduled a phone call and went over a summary of the findings focusing on the particular quotes that they provided within each of the themes presented in their case. I was able to obtain feedback from three of the four parent participants. The parent of one of the male participants did not get in contact with the
researcher despite various messages left of their voicemail. The parents were all in agreement of the findings presented to them and they had no additions to make.

In summary, validity was established in this qualitative study through the use of triangulation, researcher reflexivity, thick rich description, and member checking.

Ethical Issues

The researcher treated participants according to the ethical guidelines put forth by the American Psychological Association (APA) and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Internal Review Board. There were no foreseeable risks for participating in the present study. However, when working with Latinas/os, especially Latina/o immigrants, certain precautions must be taken to ensure that the researchers are approaching the participants in a culturally competent manner. To this end, Ojeda, Flores, Meza and Morales (2011) report honoring the cultural value of personalismo, which they describe as interpersonal connection. Additionally, they reported on various ideal qualities that are important for the researcher to possess when working with Latinos, including the following: speaking the Spanish Language, being bilingual (reading, writing, and speaking in both Spanish and English), being bicultural (the ability to navigate in two different cultures), and having an understanding of cultural nuances when conducting research with Latinas/os.

Obtaining informed consent from Latina/o participants may be critical, given that they may be unfamiliar with the research process. It is up to the culturally competent researcher to educate their participants about the research process, how the data gathered will be used, as well as informing them of their rights as participants (Ojeda et al., 2011). It is also recommended that the researcher go over the informed consent orally in order to
avoid assuming literacy ability, as well as to allow the participants to ask any questions. Additionally, Ojeda et al. (2011) discuss the importance of compensating participants for their time and reports that this is in line with the belief of “giving back” to participants for their research involvement. Compensation for Latinas/os who may not have much free time and are willing to participate in a study should be strongly considered.

All these considerations were incorporated during the research design stage. Every precaution was taken to ensure that all the families felt safe, comfortable, and had the freedom to withdraw from the study if they ever feel the need or desire to.

**The Role and Background of the Researcher**

I was born in the United States to Mexican immigrant parents and was the first in my family to obtain a college degree. Thus, my choice of research topics reflects my own background and path. Both of my parents immigrated to the United States separately as teenagers. They met and were married in California. Once in the U.S., my parents began working. Unfortunately, neither of my parents completed a high school education. In fact, they did not complete an elementary school education. My father went to school up to third grade and my mother to fifth grade. Despite their educational shortcomings, they understood the value of an education in order to succeed in the U.S. Consequently; they encouraged me to focus on school and to go to college. In 2001, I graduated from the University of California, Irvine with two Bachelor’s degrees. One was in Cognitive Psychology and the other in Spanish Language and Culture.

As a first generation college student, navigating college was not always easy. I often relied upon other Latina/o students for support and upon staff members that I had
met through a college summer program that I attended prior to my freshman year (California Alliance Minority Participation Program (CAMP)). It was staff from this program that helped me through my decision to switch majors from Biology to Psychology. Additionally, meeting a Latina professor, Dr. Jeanette Castellanos, who became my mentor, allowed me with the opportunity to get involved on research about campus and ultimately find my path to graduate school. She also connected me with other Latina/o professors, Dr. Gerardo Canul and Dr. Kathleen Harris-Canul, both of whom taught on campus and had degrees in clinical psychology. While friends, staff and professors were critical factors in my college education, so was my family, who always encouraged me to pursue my education. Not only were the former group supportive when I switched my major; so too were my parents, even when they did not understand much of what was going on. They would call me a few times a week to see how I was doing and would occasionally provide me with gas money. When I would visit home, my parents would pamper me and make me my favorite foods and send me back with some food for my roommates and me. Looking back, all of these things allowed me to move forward and prevented me from giving up on my educational dreams.

Their support continued when I discussed with them my desire to pursue a graduate degree in counseling. They shared my excitement when I was accepted, even though it meant moving out of state. My parents and my younger brother and sister drove me all the way to Nebraska to get me settled in for my graduate program. Despite being far away, they called me often, at least a couple of times a week, just to see how I was doing. In addition to my parents, I talked to cousins and aunts occasionally, and
would see them when I went home on long holiday weekends and over a few weeks in
the summer. I also received support and encouragement from my significant other, now
my husband, who was just beginning his career as an engineer at the same time that I was
beginning my graduate studies.

Reflecting back on my own college experiences, together with my field placement
and internship at a college counseling center, has sparked an interest in conducting my
dissertation on first generation Latina(o) college students and the roles that their families
have played in their adjustment to college and to their overall college experiences. My
interest in conducting research in this area has both personal and professional
significance. On a personal level, I have firsthand knowledge of what it means and feels
like to be a first-generation college student. It is a time of growth and self-discovery, but
also a time where one can feel insecure and pressured, wondering if you have what it
takes to succeed and earn a degree. For many students like myself, it was the first time
moving away from home and having to learn how to balance academics and family.
Professionally, I am gratified that I can contribute to the literature on Latinas/os in higher
education by providing a much richer understanding of the transition and adjustment to
college, as well as of the role of parental and familial support during this process via this
qualitative study.
Chapter 4

Results

Case by Case Analysis

This chapter provides a rich description of the four families that participated in this study. Following the detailed description of each student and her or his respective family, the themes that emerged within each case are presented with corresponding quotes. Each theme is described as the family members experienced it. Various statements from each theme will be presented allowing the true voices of the participants to be heard. Given that some of the interviews were conducted in Spanish, the quotes used from those interviews will be presented in Spanish first and then translated for the reader into English. The students’ interviews were all conducted in English. The student participants answered for the most part in English, although they occasionally used a few Spanish words during their interview. Of the four parent interviews, three were conducted in Spanish, per their request, and one was conducted in English. All of the student participants were asked to choose a pseudonym for the present study. A fictitious last name was assigned to the student and their family by the researcher to maintain their anonymity. The parents of the student will be referred to as Mr. Last Name and Mrs. Last Name.

Juan Fernandez and Family

A total of six themes were derived from the interviews with Juan and his parents. These interviews were conducted separately and each transcript was coded independently.
### Table 1

**Summary of Case by Case Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Characteristics of Student</th>
<th>Emerged Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fernandez Family</td>
<td>• Juan</td>
<td>• Cultural Wisdom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Male</td>
<td>• Family Support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Science Major</td>
<td>• Emotional Journey of College Adjustment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• First Generation College Student</td>
<td>• Parental Involvement in the College Experience</td>
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<td>• Freshman</td>
<td>• College Survival Skills and Aids</td>
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<td>• Lessons Learned in the First Year of College.</td>
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<td>Heredia Family</td>
<td>• Isabel</td>
<td>• Emotional Experiences in the Transition to college</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Female</td>
<td>• College Adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social Sciences Major</td>
<td>• Sources and Types of Support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• First Generation College Student</td>
<td>• Cultural Values</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Sophomore</td>
<td>• Staying Connected and Fostering Relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Being Latina in Higher Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Challenges Encountered in College</td>
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<td>Nieto Family</td>
<td>• Jack</td>
<td>• Emotional Transition to College</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Humanities Major</td>
<td>• Types of Support Experienced in College</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• First Generation College Student</td>
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<td>• Challenging College Experiences</td>
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<td>Medina Family</td>
<td>• Jazzel</td>
<td>• Feelings Associated with the Transition to College</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Female</td>
<td>• Strategies for Positive College Adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social Sciences Major</td>
<td>• Types of Support Given and Received</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• First Generation College Student</td>
<td>• Cultural Values and Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sophomore</td>
<td>• Not Understanding College Experience (challenges)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Finding My Place in College, Soy Latina</td>
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of each other beginning with the student interview then followed by the joint parent interview. After both interviews were coded, the codes from the student and the parent interview were sorted and put into groups. This step was repeated until the groups could no longer be reduced. After examining the codes in each group, the group was named resulting in the theme. Six final themes emerged and represent the voices of the student and his parents. The six themes that emerge in this case include the following: (a) cultural wisdom, (b) family support, (c) emotional journey of college adjustment, (d) parental involvement in the college experience, (e) college survival skills and aids, and (f) lessons learned. This case presentation begins with a case description that includes three sections: family background, family educational history, and a brief overview on family support. Following the case presentation, the themes are presented with supporting quotes.

**Family background.** The Fernandez family lives in a modest apartment in a large urban city on the west coast. Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez have been living together for the past 22 years. They have four sons and one daughter. Juan is the third child of the couple and the first in their family to attend college. Their two eldest sons, ages 25 and 23, no longer live at home. Juan is currently living on campus. His younger brother, age 12, and sister, age 15, still live at home. Mr. Fernandez is 39 years old. He was born in a state in central Mexico and was brought to the U.S. by his family when he was approximately 3 years old. Mrs. Fernandez is 41 years old. She is a U.S. citizen and was born on the west coast. Her parents are of Mexican descent also from the central region of Mexico. Previous to their current living situation, the Fernandez family were homeowners, but explained that they lost their home as it became extremely difficult to pay their high
mortgage. Mrs. Fernandez is a stay-at-home mom and has been out of the workforce for the past 5 years. In the past, Mrs. Fernandez worked in retail. Mr. Fernandez is currently employed as a painter and did not discuss any other previous employments. Regarding their current living arrangement, Mrs. Fernandez indicated feeling happier renting than when they were paying a mortgage on their home. She described being extremely stressed about previously having to make payments on the house.

In addition to his parents, Juan reported having a very close relationship with his paternal grandmother, who lived with them when he was growing up. It appears that his paternal grandmother served as an additional parental figure in his life who always pushed him to do well in school and go to college. In fact, Juan reports that his grandmother was very strict when it came to getting his homework done, even more so than his own parents. This close relationship with his grandmother has continued even now that he has moved away to college. He typically comes home every other week and usually talks to her during his visits.

Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez appeared to be very excited and proud that their son Juan is attending a good university. According to Juan, his parents had told him he had two options after high school -- either go to college or get a job. Juan indicates that he did not want to work right after high school and decided to prepare himself for college education. In fact, he reports that seeing his paternal uncle studying and going to college made him believe that he could do it also and perhaps do it even better. In a way, his paternal uncle served as a type of role model that suggested that college was possible and that a bachelor’s degree was attainable. He did not indicate having any discussions with his
uncle or his uncle persuading him to go to college. He did indicate that his parents were extremely supportive of his decision to pursue higher education. In discussing the application process, they lamented not being able to do more to help their son. Mrs. Fernandez was not sure what exactly happened with one particular university that Juan was interested in attending. She was unsure if he was or was not accepted. She reported that if they knew more about the process they would have been able to guide their son in applying and potentially being accepted into his top-choice university.

**Family educational history.** Juan is the first in his immediate family to attend college. He has completed his first quarter at the university and at the time of the interview was midway through his second quarter. He went into college with no major declared (undecided), but is considering a major in a science field. He has talked to his academic advisor and will be declaring a major next academic year. Both of his parents attended school in the U.S. His father completed his high school degree and his mother did not graduate high school. She indicated that she went to school up to the 11th grade. Both parents indicated they wished they had gone to college to be able to help their son through the application process and to be more knowledgeable of the college experience. Both parents have some extended family members who currently attend college. Mrs. Fernandez indicated that her sister’s two children are currently attending the same university as Juan. Mr. Fernandez has a younger male sibling who recently completed a bachelors degree from a nearby university and is currently looking for employment. According to Juan, his two older brothers did not complete a high school education (i.e., dropped out), but he did not specify in which year they dropped out. He also shared that
his older brothers have gotten in trouble with the law and have served time in jail for their mistakes. His younger sister, age 15, is on track to go to college and has expressed interest in pursuing a higher education degree. His younger brother, age 12, is also enrolled in school and is attending middle school.

Family support experiences. The Fernandez family discussed various instances of family support that occurred when their son moved away from home to college and during his first year at the university. Similarly, Juan discussed different instances where he felt his family provided support and what that support meant to him. Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez provide their son with various types of support including emotional and financial support.

Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez purchased all the things he would need in his apartment and once at the university they would often give him spending money and help him pay his rent. Additional to these types of financial support, Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez were there to emotionally support Juan by checking in on him through phone calls and texts, going to pick him up so that he could visit home on the weekends, and dropping him off. Most importantly, they were there to listen to him when he needed to vent or was frustrated with something. Juan recognizes all the support that he received from his family. It appears that he benefited greatly from the emotional support he receives, especially from his mother who always listens to him. Even though he did not share everything with his parents, he did share many things when he was frustrated as it related to his roommates or day to day things.
Figure 1. The Fernandez family.
Emergent themes.

Cultural wisdom. In the Fernandez family, cultural wisdom has to do with family values and consejos (advice) that were passed on to Juan as he was growing up and when it came time for his departure to college. These family values have played an important role in Juan’s life, and continue to do so even now that he is living away from home and in college. A value that was described by Juan was familismo (familism), that is, that family holds a great value in the lives of the individual, where family comes first and that family unity is important. For Juan, family is synonymous to “unconditional love” and he states, “Family is very important to me in my life um, they have always supported me in all my decisions.” Furthermore the value of familismo promotes deeds/actions that affect the collective (family) as opposed to the individual. It appears from the following statement that Juan has internalized the value of familismo in describing why he decided to pursue a college degree.

The reason why I come to higher education is to help, the main thing I think to motivate me in higher education is to help out my family I guess, like I think I’m doing this so that I can for my family, not only to make them proud but like also be of service when someone needs help either financially or anything like that.

For Juan, obtaining a college degree is not to look out for his best interest and future but to be in a position where he can be of service to his family. Additionally, Juan shares that the value of education was important in his family and was stressed by his parents and grandmother. Regarding these family values Juan states, “the importance of education, always giving back to your family like no matter how far you make it, family is first.”

In discussing cultural values with Juan, the topic of gender differences came into the conversation where he stated that he does not feel that his sister is getting any
different messages than the ones he received concerning higher education. Juan states, “They also encouraged my sister to go to college as well,” implying that there are no gender differences concerning education in his family. Furthermore, Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez did express that they would want to see all their children pursue a college degree. Even though Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez would support their children in their pursuit of higher education, Juan did express that his parents may have a harder time letting his sister leave the house to go to college because of her gender. He felt that they would worry about her more.

Juan made some remarks regarding his own cultural identity within the college environment. In his experience, Juan does not feel that anyone has treated him differently for belonging to an ethnic minority group. He is aware that others can observe his skin color but does not feel this has affected how others treat him on campus. Regarding his ethnicity and culture, Juan states, “I don’t really express my culture in school other than my skin color anything like that, I don’t, like, do anything to express my culture” and, “I have never really had a situation where my culture has clashed with another person’s culture or would have to have compromised my culture. I haven’t had to deal with that situation yet.” In his college experience so far Juan has been able to be who he is without compromise and recognizes that others are aware of his ethnic identity but has not experienced anything negative associated with this.

I’ve yet to experience like where my ethnicity comes into like a problem with anybody else. But I feel that being a Latino in higher education is a bit difficult because you are use to like being so close to family but you come out, off to college, where there is a great distance between you and your family and is kind of hard to adjust as well.
Although adjusting to college as a visible Latino male has not created additional barriers or created conflict for him personally, thus far, the fact that he values family and is so close to them has made it difficult to adjust to college, mainly because he misses home.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez talked about the consejos they gave their son, especially when he was leaving for college. Most of these consejos had to do with keeping him motivated to push forward, to do well academically, and some that had to do with how he should behave. The advice he received from his parents on behavior and his education included the following; “Give it all you got honey, make it worth your learning you know, make it, dale, echale ganas” [give it all you have]. “Behave and do the right thing” and “well just keep on learning you know it doesn’t matter just day by day learning, living, take it day by day.”

In addition to these pieces of advice that were geared towards his education, Mrs. Fernandez also had some life advice that she gave her son regarding starting a family. Reflecting on her own life experience she stated “and also if you get a girlfriend you know don’t have kids, cause you know we started off too young having kids you want to be when you are actually at the right time and be ready.” Mrs. Fernandez would not want to see her son start a family too young like she did. She would want him to wait until he is well-prepared to start a family.

In addition to the advice he received from his parents, Juan discussed some of the advice his grandmother gave him when he was leaving home. Similar to his parents, her advice was geared towards his behavior and doing well academically.
Yeah my grandma always says like um stand your ground and always like stand on your two feet, like don’t fall into temptation and just remember why you are there, like you are there to study and have fun but your main goal is to finish. Yeah I think the guidance that my grandma gives me, like I’m here for a purpose and I’m just wasting that purpose if I don’t do anything.

Juan’s grandmother reminds him to keep his goal in mind when he is in college and not to fall into temptations but rather keep focused and use his time wisely. Mr. Fernandez also discussed some of the advice that his mother (Juan’s grandmother) gave Juan when he was leaving home to college. According to Mr. Fernandez, Juan’s grandmother gave him the following advice:

*portate bien* [behave] you know, *sabes lo que tienes que hacer lo que no tienes que hacer* [you know what you have to do and what you don’t have to do] you know, pretty much look over yourself and do what you gotta do. Not just cause your on your own, don’t start slacking off and basically that is it.

In addition to these words of wisdom Juan received from his parents and grandmother, Juan was able to experience the type of work his father does when he went to work with him in the summer prior to beginning the fall quarter in college. This job experience served multiple purposes. It allowed Juan to save money for his first year in college and it also served as a reminder of the type of future he could potentially have if he did not continue his education. Mr. Fernandez described the work experience in the following:

Before he went to college to university he went to work with me. He worked with me throughout the summer so he could make money to pay for the room, his apartment so you know he seen, well he already knows what kind of work I do but he had the experience of being out there and working in 100 degree weather cause it was throughout the summer.

Mrs. Fernandez further elaborates that this experience allowed Juan to see and experience first hand the type of hard labor his father has to do and to show Juan that they want...
something better for him. “He sees the difference of how his dad’s living is and how we would want his to be much better than ours.” In other words, they want Juan to be able to have a different type of job and a different type of future than what they have.

**Family support.** Both Juan and his parents described family support in some detail. Specifically, Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez explained the types of support they felt they provided to their son when he left for college and also gave examples of their support. Additionally, they addressed how the support has changed over time. Similarly, Juan described the types of support his parents and family provided, gave examples of support as well as explained how their support contributed to his well-being and adjustment in college.

Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez describe various types of support ranging from providing him with “material” goods, “guidance,” “comfort,” and transportation. They would also “buy him groceries,” “wash his clothes,” and take him school supplies when he would run out of them. Additionally, Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez have made it clear to their son that they are there for him always, and have told him repeatedly that he can always call them if he needs anything. His parents have made sure he is aware that they are only a phone call away. It appears that Juan is not the type of person to ask for help or call them. According to both of his parents, they have to call him because he usually will not take the initiative to call them. Additionally, Juan does not have a vehicle on campus and relies on both of his parents for transportation when he wants to visit home and when it is time to go back to school. When discussing support, Mrs. Fernandez also mentioned that being positive, uplifting, and showing those emotions towards her son Juan was a form of
support. Regarding the provision of support, Mrs. Fernandez made the following statements: “Well comfort maybe providing what he needs, advice, providing him what he needs just in that.”

So the support a lot of it comes financially like rent, the things he needed when he first left . . . also by not burdening him with any other issues that may be going on in your home and giving him good vibes.

Just like, I’m talking all support, verbally, ah mentally, um material and yeah just you’ve got to show um an outgoing vibe towards you know towards the way he feels, about him continuing his education, you have to give him those good vibes you know that you are going to be happy for him and his accomplishments and everything else.

During my discussion with Juan, he talked about the types of support he experienced from his parents, and things he felt his parents did that showed him they were supporting him. Specifically he said his parents would often give him “spending money,” and help him pay for his rent as well as being there to listen to him “vent.” He described the following examples of family support:

My family supports me in a lot of ways like my mom always gives me guidance of what to do and also financially supports me, spiritually supports me in a way too they always to listen to what feels best

So like financial needs and stuff like that, I just like when I need somebody to talk to, or just to de-stress I guess they are there to listen to me complain about school or anything like that.

It appears that Mrs. Fernandez was a good source of emotional support for her son and that he felt comfortable talking to her about a lot of things that were bothering him.

Additionally, they made themselves available to him and encouraged him to call home.

My parents like made sure that I always call them and made sure oh and if you need anything tell us there is no point of holding it in cause you cant tell your housemate anything personally so if you need to vent, vent to us and financially like school supplies or an extra hundred dollars for my rent or anything they felt necessary to give.
She would just ask me, like, how my week is and I would tell her all the stuff I did and tell her and pretty much vent to her and tell her all the annoying things that happened in the week and she’s like oh well you are there for a reason and its to better yourself pretty much get a job that you could be comfortable in.

Just the way they talk to me like when I’m venting they listen and like they give me support and guidance on how I’m doing cause if they were not able to trust in like my struggles . . . and dismiss them like something simple and like well get over it or something like that, but No, they actually give me guidance, like how to handle it and just remind like me why I'm there, I'm here, learning.

Juan described a situation where he found himself feeling lonely and a bit frustrated at having to wait all week for a Friday final. His family came to support him without him directly asking for help. It was finals week, and his roommates were done early in the week and left. His mom called to check in with him and found that he was alone in his apartment. She offered to come over with the rest of his family to spend the day with him and cook for him.

Um just the support that they provided me cause I told them like I guess I'm just going to go to sleep early and do nothing all day and they just came and support and in some ways like support me cause I thought I was going to be home alone all day and like they just came.

Juan further elaborated the following; “My parents came over and like they cooked for me and like they just stood there with me for a good day, gave me something to do.” Juan is able to recognize that the support he receives from his family makes his ability to pursue higher education less difficult. Consequently, he values the role that support plays in his education. Additionally, the support that he receives from family members makes him feel closer and more connected to his family.

But then if your family is very supportive like as mine it feels like you are not that far from home but I see how Latinos are really like. Families that are less fortunate than mine I could see how like it’s hard, like if I didn’t have my family's support it would be difficult for me to come to school because I would have hardly anybody to vent to, or help me.
Emotional journey of college adjustment. For Juan and his family the transition to college and the process of adjustment was an emotional journey. This emotional journey is experienced not only by Juan who is beginning a new chapter in his life but also by the family he leaves behind, most notably his parents and grandmother. Juan describes his departure to school as an emotional one filled with excitement. He states,

I was really excited to begin this new chapter in my life. Um, at some point I really got desperate to go. I don’t know, I just got really excited to go and I didn’t really think of my family or anything like that I just wanted to leave and start school.

In interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez it became clear that they experienced emotional turmoil in the form of mixed emotions regarding their child’s departure that included worry and concern after he was living on campus. Regarding the mixed emotions, Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez related feeling very proud that their son was able to continue his education at a great university but at the same time expressed feeling somewhat concerned that he would be on his own for the first time. To exemplify these mixed emotions, Mrs. Fernandez stated, “Um well, I was happy that you know that he is going to college and just the, a little bit nervous at first, cause he was going to stay on campus and you know we haven’t been without him” and “Well I mean as far as him, leaving, I mean of course you feel like God, is he going to be okay? you know, Is he sad?”

Mr. Fernandez also shared some concern regarding his son being on his own and the responsibilities it entails such as making it to class on time and worried if his son would be able to manage. Mr. Fernandez stated, “just hoping that he makes it on time to class all the time, pretty much, cause sometimes he could be a little like at the last minute get up at the last minute for, to do things.” For Juan, moving away to college was something he
wanted to do despite his grandmother’s wishes that he stay at home while in college.

According to Juan, his grandmother also experienced some mixed emotions about his
departure as he explains: “Yeah, my grandmother, definitely she was definitely happy
but wasn’t happy at the same time. She was happy I was going to college but not happy
that I was leaving home to go to college.”

When discussing his adjustment process, Juan describes this journey as one that
he did on his own. Specifically he states:

I don’t think they [family] really impacted it a lot because most of it I’ve done
myself. But they definitely help with the little things like anything I need they
were trying to give it to me or like that help that I can’t provide for myself they
would fill in that help.

Juan sees himself directly involved in his adjustment process and feels that his family did
not play a major role in it. He does give his family credit for helping him and trying to
understand him. Interestingly, he feels that in a way his close relationship with his family
made it harder for him to adjust to college. Juan states the following:

Yeah it made it harder cause I’m use to like being with my family there, my living
space is full of noise and stuff like that and its just like it felt kind of empty at first,
but then my parents always supporting me and filling that space that they couldn’t
fill because of the distance, tried to fill that up, I guess brought me closer.

For Juan his family represents a double edge sword. On the one hand, he
welcomes their help and support, but on the other hand, it is the closeness with his family
that ultimately makes the adjustment process more difficult for him because he misses
them. Juan was also able to share that even though his parents do not have college
experience, he feels that they try to understand what he is going through. Juan describes
his adjustment as a struggle, when he states, “Yeah, they [family] definitely do even
though they don’t understand like most of my experiences that I feel, they definitely like sympathize with my struggle.” When describing his adjustment to college Juan indicates that his academic adjustment has been easier than his social adjustment, which he continues to work on. Regarding his academic adjustment Juan indicates:

I would say academic-wise, I adjusted very well. Since high school I’ve been taking college level classes so the transition wasn’t that hard. I just thought I needed to add more study hours because it’s definitely more rigorous than high school.

Concerning his social adjustment, Juan describes not knowing how to interact in college because he feels it is very different from his previous high school. Additionally, it seems that he is venturing out more in the social arena. He describes his social adjustment in the following manner:

I guess the social aspect, like coming into college and how to interact with people in higher education, cause interacting with people in high school is different than interacting with people in college. I just feel in my experience.

Then socially I’m starting to get into the whole being social at the college level like joining clubs and stuff like that, but not that much.

Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez described feeling that their son is adjusting well to college and described him as being comfortable at the university. They did describe being somewhat worried about the large campus and having their son go from one side of campus to the other and whether or not he would know his way around. Nevertheless, they felt he was doing well adjusting to his new environment. Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez stated, “I know he’s adjusted to it, first of all he likes learning and he’s there for what he’s there for you know.” “He's more comfortable.” According to Mr. Fernandez, Juan himself reports he likes the university and is doing well. “Yeah, he enjoys it, he likes it, you know, pretty much. So how is it going how are you doing? He is always just good,
good, good.” Furthermore, Mrs. Fernandez stated that they had received a letter stating that her son was on the dean’s honor list for doing well academically, which made her feel he was adjusting well. She states, “He is in the honors dean stuff, cause we got a letter saying your child has been elected, because of his grades, so I know he’s doing good.”

**Parental involvement in the college experience.** There are various ways in which Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez have been able to involve themselves in their son’s college experience. Most notably in the messages and guidance that they provide Juan prior to his departure and during his adjustment to college and in the way they have managed to stay connected when he moved away from home. Furthermore, they actively participate in some of Juan’s decision-making processes. Over the course of making decisions, one thing does remain constant, his parents overwhelmingly support Juan and they want him to succeed in college.

Juan’s parents appear to have involved themselves in what would be their son’s college experience even before he set foot on campus. Early on they planted in him the seed of pursuing higher education by telling him that he had one of two options either start working after high school graduation or go to college. Similarly, Juan’s grandmother would also encourage him to pursue a college degree. Juan recalls how his parents talked about his options and how this made him seriously start to consider college.

I’ve been wanting to pursue higher education, like I’ve known I guess they are teaching, like they are repeating either you work or you go to a higher education for a better job I think like that is what set the idea like oh I want to go to higher education.
Additionally, his parents want Juan to take advantage of his opportunity to pursue higher education and to succeed academically so that he has a better future than the one they had. Mr. Fernandez states, “we want him to make the best he can out of it, you know, and to you know, to be something in life pretty much. Cause we are very proud of him.”

Mrs. Fernandez states:

make yourself successful and um, I'm proud of him I’m very, very proud of him and um, . . . be somebody, for yourself because we don’t want him to, we just want him to educate himself to have a better life, a better career, better with himself, not for us for himself.

Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez discuss the multiple ways that they maintain contact with Juan when he moved away. They stay in contact through phone calls and text messages as well as home visits. Regarding the frequency of the phone calls and who initiates them, Juan’s parents indicated that they are the ones that initiate the calls to see how he is doing. In fact, Mr. Fernandez shared that a lot of the phone calls and communication are initiated by Mrs. Fernandez and not by Juan. “Yeah, she communicates more with him than I do. He does not communicate, he won’t call us you know maybe until Thursday but throughout the whole week if we don’t call him he won’t call us.” Mrs. Fernandez states that she communicates with Juan “more like four days out of the week.” In addition to the telephone calls and texts, Mrs. Fernandez also indicates that she usually goes and picks him up and drops him off to school when he goes home for the weekend.

Picking him up when he wants to get picked up. We don’t wait if he has to get picked up maybe on Wednesday, we don’t have to wait till Friday to pick him up we will pick him um… I'd say the communication is us towards him yeah.

Juan’s report of how often he goes home an his parents recollection of the home visits differ in regards to their frequency. According to Juan he goes home about every other
week. He states, “UM every other week, like some weekends I stay and others I go.”

However, his parents reported that he comes home almost every weekend and that he has only missed coming home a couple of weekends so far. “Maybe he just missed like two weekends cause he’s had something to do with his friends or he had some tests and he had to study for his test.” Taking both perspectives into account it seems that at the very least he is coming home twice or three times each month.

These frequent visits have helped the family stay connected. Consequently, their relationships appear to have been maintained despite moving away from home.

Regarding the state of their relationship, Mr. Fernandez states, “No, our relationship hasn’t changed. It’s always, it’s the same.” Similarly, Mrs. Fernandez felt that their relationship was “still the same, still close.” Although the relationship with his parents appears to continue the same after his departure, Mrs. Fernandez feels that it has affected the relationship with his two siblings who are still at home, particularly with his younger brother. “Actually, I think with my little one a little bit distanced because first of all they were not even close but I think now it is a little bit more distanced.”

One of the other ways that Juan’s parents have involved themselves in Juan’s college experience has been through their involvement in his decision-making process. It is his mother’s perception that she influenced his choice of major in a science field.

I chose his career cause I know how good he is. Where he’s at from what I’ve seen, where he is, so I chose like hey I think you should be this and he’s like well no mom I chose to be this in the same category as you want me to be but higher.

Although it is unclear if she influenced his choice of major it does appear that they were in agreement concerning what she perceived to be a strength of his and what he decided
to major in. Another example that shows how his parents have involved themselves in his decision making process has to do with his decision to stay on campus or move back home for his second year. Juan has discussed this at some length with his parents and they both are supportive in whatever decision he makes. Mr. Fernandez stated:

Well now that his year is almost over, you know we’ve been telling him what are you going to do next, I mean cause he might come home, he might not. He’s still undecided really, and so we are with him one hundred percent with whatever he decides to do. Like yes, we want him to come home cause he’d be with us but whatever he chooses the right thing to do, we will be with him, um, cause he was telling us now that he’s in the end of the year that the contract is over. He has to renew the contract to the room or he has to find someone else to take his place in the room or something.

Similarly, Mrs. Fernandez felt the same way about this critical decision and states, “I tell him well whatever you want to do if you want to still stay in your living arrangement you could if not if you want to come back home, come back home.” Juan felt his mother was encouraging him to come home. The following statement conveys Juan’s belief that if he comes back home his parents would be able to provide him with more than what they can do when he is away.

She was encouraging me to commute and she was like telling me you can live here again or commute our support would be much better if you were just at home because it would be much easier from us and on you just for us to greet you and give you whatever you need cause you are not an hour away.

His conversations with his parents and their involvement in this decision made Juan think more about what he wanted to do and ultimately helped him make a choice. It appears that he is considering commuting from home.

I made the decision last night because I was like yeah that kind of sounds better cause I was on the fence of commuting or finding apartments and just talking about commuting got me more excited than living here again.
**College survival skills and aids.** Juan describes several skills or aids that have helped him do well in college his first year, including the importance of class attendance, time management, and having role models to keep him motivated in college. In a discussion he was having with his mother, Juan told his mother how important it is to be in class. If he misses just one lecture, he would not know what is going on in the class. She states, “He’s told me that, too, if I don’t go to class, I don’t know what I’m doing; I don’t know what the teacher taught that day. I could ask someone but it’s not the same.” His mother also makes it a point to bring her son back on campus so that he makes it on time to his classes. She points out that there have been times that they wait until Monday to take him back and then she is concerned that he will be late. On at least one occasion she dropped him off on campus instead of his apartment so that he would make it on time. “Thank God we always make it there on time.”

Regarding his time management skills, Juan discussed that it was helpful to him to keep a to-do list during his first quarter in college and that this helped him to stay on track. However, during his second quarter things changed and he was not writing things down and he learned that it was not the same writing the to-do list down as keeping a mental note about what had to get done.

I guess not seeing it written down and just having it in my head like I would think like oh I have time to do this or I have time to do that but not really realizing all the things I had to do I think visually seeing all the things I had to do made me think like oh I need to do this now to get this clear out of the way. Not seeing it made me think like I have a lot of time to do this and I just didn’t.

Juan is so aware of the importance of time management in college that he expressed that when he is able to achieve a balance with his time between schoolwork and socializing, is
when he will know he has adjusted to college. The balance he wants to achieve is being able to integrate the social aspect of being in college such as going out with friends, with the academic demands of being in college that include completing assignments and studying. Juan recognizes that it has been difficult for him to achieve this balance and he finds himself some days dedicated completely to studying and then other days when he does not study at all and is going out having fun and socializing.

I think the moment I know I’m fully adjusted is when I am able to organize my time where I am able to put time into studying as well as also to go out and have fun as well. Like balance between my life.

In addition to the valuable skills that Juan has learned to be important to his college success, he has also become aware that role models in his life have aided him and served as motivators. Furthermore, his parents also see that Juan will have an impact and serve as a role model to his younger siblings at home.

He (uncle) hasn’t really talked to me about that I don’t know, I guess just seeing him go to higher education and seeing how he is now, like trying to get a job as a teacher, gave me an idea of like cause seeing how he works is different from how my dad works and stuff like that.

For Juan having seen his uncle complete his undergraduate degree and now looking for employment as a teacher allows him to see the value of a college education and how it will set him apart from the type of work his father does for a living. Mrs. Fernandez also noted that Juan being the first in his immediate family to go to college serves as a role model to his younger siblings. “And then also you know he inspired his younger brother and sister also to look forward to go to college cause he’s the first one of all the kids to go to the university.” In addition to his uncle who has recently earned a college degree, Juan
has two cousins currently enrolled in college. These cousins may also have served as role models, inspiring him to go to college.

**Lessons learned in the first year of college.** One of the lessons learned during the first year of college for both Juan and his parents had to do with the financial aspect of living on campus. At the time of the interviews Juan was trying to decide if he should continue to live on campus the following year or if he should commute and live at home.

At one point in the interview, Mrs. Fernandez describes living on campus as a “luxury” and relates it to her own experience of being a homeowner. She states, “We've had the same luxury like, living like other people but it was hard for us, you know, we couldn’t afford it and we let it go and now I think we live better.” She also reported that her nephews who attend the same university as Juan decided to commute after some time in college due to how expensive it is to live on campus. Mrs. Fernandez states, “They’ve seen themselves, cost of living is too much, you know the living luxury on your own is a lot; it’s really, really, a lot.” Regardless of his decision, his parents indicate that they will support him no matter what he decides.

One of the other things that Juan learned in his first year is that there are things he feels comfortable sharing with his parents and other things he does not share regarding his college experience; in part, because he feels that they will not understand. Juan feels more at ease with his parents discussing social situations and interactions and everyday living situations that he experiences with his roommates. He feels comfortable “venting” to them about these situations when needed. With regard to the things he does talk about with his parents, Juan stated, “I would just tell them like, um, the type of work I’m doing
right now or how annoyed I am, and situations that happen at home, at the apartment or anything like that, interactions with people.” However, there are things he does not share with them, which have to do more with academic adjustment. Juan states, “I guess it’s like the anxiety before tests and after tests as well like or just like the trouble of integrating within the school system or just feeling like, (I’m) having a hard time socializing with other people.” From this statement it appears that Juan does not like to share difficulties experienced as he adjusts to college. Rather than talk to his parents about these issues he talks to others who have college experience including friends from high school and his uncle who is a recent college graduate. Juan states, “I also talk to my uncle too because, the one that went to college, just to share experiences between what he experienced and what I’m experiencing.” Knowing that his parents have no college experience is a barrier that keeps him from sharing these types of experiences with them. Perhaps he feels that they may not be able to relate to what he is experiencing as opposed to individuals like his uncle or his friends who are in college.

Mrs. Fernandez regrets not finishing high school, and laments not having gone to college. She expressed feeling that perhaps she could have been more helpful to all her children in their education, had she continued with her own education.

I wish I would have continued my education so I could be there and help them that would have made me even better. You know but I didn’t you know, and even my seventh grader, his work in nothing compared to like when I was in 7th grade so I tell him I don’t know how to help you, you know I can’t do you work I don’t even know what you are doing cause our work wasn’t like yours.

During the interview Mr. Fernandez also shared that he wished he had continued his education further for reasons similar to those stated by Mrs. Fernandez. Not having a
college education affected Juan’s parents’ confidence in helping him with his schooling and guidance in college as it pertained to academics.

**Isabel Heredia and Family**

A total of seven themes were derived from the interviews with Isabel and her parents. The same steps that were taken in the previous case were employed in this case to obtain the final themes. These seven groups resulted in the themes that emerged and that represent the voices of Isabel and her parents. The seven themes that emerged in this case include the following: (a) emotional experiences in the transition to college, (b) college adjustment, (c) sources and types of support, (d) cultural values, (e) staying connected and fostering relationships, (f) being Latino in higher education, and (g) challenges encountered in college. This case presentation begins with a case description that includes three sections: family background, family educational history and a brief overview on the experience of support. After the case presentation each theme is discussed in some detail with supporting quotes.

**Family background.** The Heredia family live in a city on the west coast surrounded by rich agricultural and dairy industry. Mr. and Mrs. Heredia have been married for approximately 21 years. Together they have four children, two females and two males. Isabel is the eldest: She is 19 years old and is the first in her family to attend college. She is currently living away at college. The other three siblings all live at home. Following Isabel is her younger sister, age 17, who is currently in high school and plans to go to a 4-year college. The older of the two male siblings is 12 years old and is in sixth grade. The youngest child in the family is 3 years old and is not in school yet.
Mr. Heredia is 44 years old. He first immigrated to the U.S. when he was 16 years old. He came to the U.S. in search of better economic opportunities and to find employment. Mrs. Heredia is 40 years old. She immigrated to the U.S. after she married Mr. Heredia. She married at age 20, leaving behind her parents and some siblings in Mexico. Prior to his marriage, Mr. Heredia worked in construction in an urban area of the west coast for some years. He has some siblings that currently live in a larger urban area of the west coast. He is the fourth child in a family of eight siblings. Mr. Heredia, moved to the agricultural/dairy community where he ultimately settled and bought a home for his family. Currently, Mr. Heredia works in a dairy as a milker and has a demanding work schedule, where he gets one rotating day off each week. Mrs. Heredia has been a stay-at-home mom for the most part. She has worked part-time jobs in the past, usually in small, Hispanic-owned shops in the community including a bakery and a clothing shop. She recently began working part-time in a fast-food restaurant.

Isabel appears to have a close relationship with her parents, particularly her mother. According to Isabel the relationship with her parents has become closer now that she moved away. Additionally, she indicates that her father has been more affectionate towards her and expresses his emotions more since she left for college. With her siblings, Isabel indicates that she was closer to her brothers than with her sister. Isabel and her younger sister shared a room and would often argue. She states that they appear to be getting along much better now that she is no longer living at home.

At one point the Heredia family had two homes. They rented one and lived in the other. In 2006, her parents sold the rental home. For some years prior to their departure
they were having a home built for them in Mexico. Once it was done, Mrs. Heredia and her three children left for Mexico. Mr. Heredia stayed in the U.S. to continue working and build more capital. During the time they were over in Mexico, Mr. Heredia would go about every 2 months to visit and then the entire family would spend the summer in the U.S. The plans of staying to live in Mexico changed when Mr. Heredia became ill. The family decided to move back to the U.S. In the end they lived in Mexico for 2 years.

**Family educational history.** Isabel is the first in her family to go to college. She is currently in her second year at the university. Isabel has declared a major in the social science field. Both Mr. and Mrs. Heredia went to school in Mexico. Mrs. Heredia earned her high school diploma and Mr. Heredia only completed an elementary education up to sixth grade. Mr. Heredia grew up in a rural town in Mexico and his family had more financial constraints than Mrs. Heredia. He did not continue his education because he needed to work to help his family financially.

In their extended family, Isabel has some cousins who are currently in college and two who recently graduated from a 4-year institution. One of her cousins is attending the same university as Isabel and has been very helpful to her in college. Mr. and Mrs. Heredia are very proud of their daughter for her accomplishments and they want all their children to pursue a college degree. They understand that in the U.S. there are more opportunities for lower income families to pursue higher education, something that is not possible in Mexico. Although Mr. and Mrs. Heredia do not have college experience themselves, they put a high value on education and have pushed all their children to do well academically. Mrs. Heredia likes to participate in school programs and attended
various information sessions on the college requirements and application process that were offered in Spanish at her daughter’s high school. She felt that these information sessions were very valuable to her and that she was learning about the process of applying to college and understanding the differences among different institutions of higher education. Mr. Heredia was unable to attend these sessions given his demands at work.

**Experience of support.** Isabel has experienced much support from her family in the pursuit of higher education. In a way the family has learned together as she applied and was accepted to college and finally moving away from home. The latter proved to be most difficult for her parents to accept, especially her father. Isabel grew up extremely close to her family and very protected. She was not allowed to go out like most teenagers her age. Her dad would not let her go out with her male cousins because she was the only female and he thought it was not okay. Many times she had to convince him that it was okay and once in a while he gave in.

When it came time to decide on which college she would attend there was some conflict with her parents. The first one had to do with moving out of state to the east coast for college. Isabel discussed with her parents her desire to move to the east coast for college and they were having a difficult time accepting her decision. They expressed to her that they did not want her to leave and go so far from home. Her mother had conversations with her about what it would mean for her and the family if she left and that coming back home to visit would be expensive and not occur very often. Her father wanted her to pursue a college degree but he also did not want her to move out of the
house. He was hoping that she would go to a university that was approximately one hour away from their home and that she would commute. Regarding this matter her mother was more lenient. She felt that Isabel had worked hard to get herself in a position where she could choose where to go. Her mother also understood that the university that she could commute to was not as prestigious as others to which she was accepted.

Once Isabel decided on a college that was relatively close to home, her parents were completely supportive of her. They have supported her financially and emotionally when she has needed it the most. Isabel understands that she can count on her family for unconditional support.

**Emergent themes.**

**Emotional experiences in the transition to college.** This theme describes the emotional experiences that Isabel and her parents felt when she left home to go to college. For the Heredia family the transition from home to college of their eldest daughter was an emotional experience that can be best described as mixed feelings. For Isabel the feelings associated with her departure were excitement and stress.

So it was exciting but at the same time really stressing like oh I have to get all this and so little time and you know, and you think like you have all this time, oh I have all summer and I don’t go until late September, but yeah, at the end it was really stressing like just trying to get everything all in a month I guess.

She was excited to begin this new chapter in her life that she had worked so hard to accomplish. The stress in part came from feeling rushed to get all her things together for the move to campus and although she did not state it leaving home for the first time. For most of the summer she had been with her family in Mexico visiting with relatives. The
morning they came back on the red-eye flight, her father made the 3-hour drive with her and dropped her off for a 2-day orientation on campus. After orientation was done
Figure 2. The Heredia family.
she had only a few weeks to shop and get all the dorm essentials, and get her things packed. Here is how she describes the rush at the end.

But you have to buy this, get this, you have to go here and then that summer I was actually in Mexico, for like two months and a half so it wasn’t really like I had all summer to like get all my things ready so it was pretty much, I actually came back the day of orientation I flew in and it was like three in the morning, and my dad, we hadn’t slept and we came directly to orientation.

For Mr. and Mrs. Heredia, their daughter’s departure was a mix between feeling proud and happy toward their daughter’s accomplishments as well as feeling worry and concern for their daughter’s departure. Mr. Heredia indicated feeling “tristes porque ya se esta rompiendo la, la familia ya se esta saliendo de la casa.” [Sad because the, the family is breaking apart and she is leaving home.] Mrs. Heredia also stated feeling sad but at the same time hopeful. “Lo mismo triste y ilusionados, pidiendo mucho a Dios que logre sus metas” [The same sad and hopeful, asking God to allow her to reach her goals.]

According to Mrs. Heredia, Isabel’s siblings were also sad when she left home and eager when she is going to come home to visit. She further elaborated that they see Isabel as a second mom because she is the oldest. “Si tristes y la agarran como con una especie de mama, por que ella es la mayor, entonces estan anciosos cuando va a venir a visitarnos.” [Yes, sad, they see her as a kind of mom because she is the oldest, then they are anxious when she is about to come to visit us.] Isabel also experiences feelings of sadness especially when she misses family things such as outings. Her mother stated, “le da tristesa perderse cosas familiares” [She is saddened to miss family things.]

The transition also brought emotions to the surface that had not been expressed before. Isabel shares that her father was not the type of individual that showed emotions
and it was during the process of leaving the house that she felt her father began to show emotions towards her. It appears that having her father opening up emotionally had positive consequences in their relationship. Although her mother was more in touch with her emotions and Isabel had witnessed this in her mother, she too became emotional dropping off her daughter. Isabel describes her father’s emotional goodbye and it appears that even though no words were exchanged, the emotions speak for themselves. “When they dropped me off he did, like, cry, like, that was about it, like the hug and the cry, I guess that says more than any words he could have said.” Having her dad express emotions was something new to Isabel and it caused her own emotional reaction to this new experience.

At first it was hard it was harder to like see my dad cry, something I had never seen. He wasn’t the emotional showing type so it was like I had never seen him cry so I’m a cry baby so I automatically started breaking down crying when he cried, when my mom cried even though with my mom I had seen her cry before. So I think that just kind of made it harder at first knowing how they were supporting me but I know my dad at that time supported me but wasn’t really okay with my decision so I guess seeing him cry kind of made it harder for me at first and then slowly it was better.

**College adjustment.** The college adjustment theme reflects both Isabel’s experience of college adjustment and her parent’s perception of how she has adjusted to college. The college adjustment for Isabel consists of both her academic experience in college and how she integrates herself socially on campus.

Isabel reports that the adjustment process was not easy for her but thinks it was good for her. The difficulty she experienced was related to leaving her family home as well as getting used to the college level courses. She describes it in the following manner:
It was hard but good at the same time. Like it was hard moving away from home because I was use to it. Also like I was really attached to my baby brother so it was kind of like I missed him knocking things over making me laugh at silly baby things they do. And then in general it was different, and then it was hard course-wise because even though I took AP classes in high school it was a lot different. I know they are supposed to prepare you, and this and that. I still thought like college courses are still like very difficult besides the fact that I was in AP courses. So the transition was hard at first and then I mean you get use to it.

Isabel talked about adjustment to college as an ongoing process. Each quarter brings her new classes and new professors to which she needs to learn to adapt. It appears that even though she is in her second year she feels she is still adjusting.

I think yeah its an ongoing process and you do like as more time goes by you don't like stress out or freak out about it as much as I would my first quarter my first year you know. It would be like this is horrible and this and that and then like you learn to like deal with it, manage it.

She also indicates that the academic adjustment was the most difficult for her.

I think the hardest was academically, because I didn’t know what to expect so it was different and then high school getting straight A's and its like college its difficult to get an A even though you try its not as easy I guess . . . I’ve seen A's like all my life. I mean you learn to adjust to it as well, like its better to study like this, you know, you’ll get a better grade if you focus on this. But yeah, I think that was the hardest transition at first, academically.

As far as social adjustment, Isabel talked about relying on her cousin who was already a student at her college to answer any questions she had. Furthermore, her cousin introduced her to some of her friends and to a Latina/o organization on campus that she joined. Regarding being part of this organization she stated the following:

Yes it was helpful, yeah because it was easier for me to communicate with them if I had like whole adjustment kind of thing or I was not sure on a question or something I knew like I was more comfortable speaking to them about it, to whoever I got close in the group. I’d be like oh what is this or what is that it was just more I was comfortable with them so if I had a problem or a question I wouldn’t feel like I’m going to ask a stupid question or something and then they are going to laugh at me, I felt more comfortable with it.
It appears that belonging to a group with which she felt comfortable was essential for Isabel to integrate into college.

Mr. and Mrs. Heredia also talked about their daughter’s adjustment. Mrs. Heredia described her daughter’s adjustment process as more difficult than easy. She stated, “yo creo que mas dificil que facil” [I believe that it was more difficult than easy.] Both parents believed that Isabel had adjusted well. Her father stated that “Las mismas ganas que tiene de sobresalir, de estudiar, de ser quien eres, osea es lo que le da fuerzas.” [The same desire that she has to excel, to study, to be who she is, that is what gives her strength.] Her mother also felt that Isabel had adjusted well because Isabel was able to problem solve more effectively with the challenges she encountered on campus. Her mother stated, “Lo que la miro que busca soluciones para sus problemas con mas facilidad” [What I see is that she looks for solutions to her problems more easily.] Her mother also feels that finding a college that would give her balance between what she wanted academically with what she needed emotionally was key to her adjustment. In her parent’s eyes this college would be one that was not too far from home and this helps in achieving the desired balance. Mrs. Heredia stated the following:

_Ella tenia que elegir un colegio que la tuviera balanceada en los dos sentidos que ofreciera academicamente lo que ella ocupaba pero que emocionalmente tambien le brindara una estabilidad._

[She needed to choose a college that kept her balanced in both ways, that it offered what she needed academically but also emotionally and that it would bring her stability.]

**Sources and types of support.** This theme (sources and types of support) describes the different types of support that Isabel’s parents provided to her when she left
to college and as she continues with her second year. Her parents give various examples about how they have been able to provide support. Isabel also talks about the individuals involved in providing support to her, the different types of support, and examples of the support she received and how it affects her in college.

The individuals who were involved in providing support according to Isabel are her parents and her cousin who lives on campus. Isabel expressed that her parents have been overall supportive of her decision to pursue higher education. There was only one area where her parents were not completely supportive of her. That was moving too far from home. Her parents always wanted her to continue her education but did not want her to move out of state. This was in conflict with one of the colleges that Isabel was considering. It was located on the east coast. In the end her parents were ready to accept her decision and supported her. Isabel opted for a college that was on the west coast approximately 3.5 hours away from her hometown.

Mr. Heredia expressed the following about having his daughter leave to the east coast.

*Por ejemplo a (la costa este) como que le interesaba le deciamos no mija esta muy lejos, una emergencia, una necesidad, no sabiamos. Uno nunca sabe y pues ni como nosotros no tenemos las posibilidades para decir o pues ahorita nos vamos, pero si, pero al ultima le dije no me agradaria mucho que te fueras tan lejos pero tu sabras, tu tienes la ultima palabra. Y no a la ultima decidio quedarse aqui.*

[For example to the east coast, like she was interested and we would tell her honey, its too far, an emergency, a need, we don’t know. We never know and like we don’t have the means to say, well right now we’ll go. But yes, at the end I told her I would not like it too much if you left that far but you should know you have the last word. And no at the end she decides to stay here.]
Despite her parents being hesitant about her leaving far away at the end they were prepared to support her if she decided to go far. Regarding the support she received from her parents she states, “my family supported me all the way.” She always receives emotional support from them and knows she can count on them no matter what issue she encounters.

Just knowing that you have someone, you know there is someone there for you even though like I said a right decision, wrong decision, a problem or a good outcome. There is somebody there and yeah for me its still like if it’s something they wouldn’t like its still like the lecture of why they don’t like it or why it was bad but at the end they’d be there.

Isabel knows she can go to them for unconditional support even if she makes a decision that they would not necessarily approve. Isabel also goes to her mom for support when she is encountering difficulties in her classes, and even though her mom has not gone to college she listens and gives her advice.

Yeah, I mean I’d say like if it was a hard day in general you know, or for the first time I did really bad on a test. I’d tell my mom she’d be like did you study hard enough? And then I’d be like yeah I studied a lot and then she’d be like did you try your best? You know, then it’s okay, learn from it or think what like now you know the exam format if it was the first time she’s like study better for next time.

Another way that Isabel feels that her parents are supporting her is in their trust in her and in believing in her ability to be a successful student. They also check in on her regarding what she is studying and keep her motivated to meet her goals.

For both academically and personally like they trust like what I’m doing, they trust that I’m not just partying or whatever. That I’m also focusing on school like they always ask me about my classes about if I have changed my mind about what I want to do.

They tell me yeah, keep going you can do it even if it gets hard, like, anything is possible you know and then its like you know its worth it so keep going at the end its worth it like the result will be worth it you’ll have a career, a better job, and then since I grew up and seen like oh you know financially it's hard on my
dad and he struggles and if he would have had an education it could have been different. So they tell me that its worth it and just like motivate me to keep going.

**Cultural values.** The theme, cultural values, has to do with the values that Isabel grew up with in her home and how she integrates them when she is on her own in college. Isabel talks about some gender differences that she noticed growing up and how that came up when she left home for college. She also talks about other values that were instilled in her by her parents and how they affect her in college. Isabel also shares some of the *consejos* or advice she received from her parents. Mr. and Mrs. Heredia discussed some of the *consejos* they gave their daughter when she left and also discussed how their daughter’s gender may have affected their response when she wanted to move far away from home to go to college.

Isabel talked about some of the values her family instilled in her and recalls that being responsible was an important value that applied to school, to work, and personally.

They always taught me like being responsible is important for anything for school for work you have to be on time just like you have to turn in homework assignments on time it shows like it shows like who you are. So I think like always them telling me how important that was helped me in being like yes I have to do this on time. I have to be on time for everything. . . . I guess they instilled in me their morals what they thought was right what they thought was wrong.

In addition to being responsible she also talked about the high value placed on education in her family, and that it was something that her parents wanted for all their children. They always encouraged her and her siblings to do well academically.

When Isabel was about to leave for college her parents had a party for her and invited all the family. For her parents this going away party symbolized that her family
was supportive of her decision to pursue her education. Regarding this event, Mr. Heredia stated:

_Pues le hicimos una reunion familiar para que ella supiera que todos apoyamos sus sueños. Simbolicamente pues es una manera de decir todos apoyamos los sueños, cuando ella viene a casa a veces tratamos lo mas posible en reuniones familiares y todo para que ella se sienta con una familia y apoyada._

[Well we had a family get together so that she would know that we all support her dreams. Symbolically, it’s a way to tell her that we all support her dreams. When she comes to visit we try to have family get togethers so that she feels part of the family and supported.]

Maintaining the family united was also something that Mrs. Heredia talked about. She stated “_Los Latinos tradicionales . . . estamos acostumbrados a tener la familia unida._” [Traditional Latinos . . . we are used to having the family united]. This value of familism, keeping the family united, is probably one of the factors that made it hard for Mr. and Mrs. Heredia to accept that their daughter leave out of state for college. Another factor that may have affected them in letting go of their daughter is that culturally for traditional Latinos you leave your parent’s home when you are getting married. Mr. Heredia stated the following:

_Cuando se separa, es por que ya se caso o quizo sea que va salir de la casa por decirlo es cuando se casaban que se iva. Porque no estudiaban por que no habia posibilidades por lo menos aya en Mexico no es lo mismo que aqui._

[When you separate (from family) it’s because you already got married or something. That is, that you’re leaving home, so to speak, is when you’re getting married and then leave. Because they didn’t go study, because there were no possibilities (financial) at least in Mexico its not the same as here (US).]

Regarding gender differences, Mr. and Mrs. Heredia both talked about how their daughter’s gender affected them. However, in my opinion, they minimized the gender difference overall. At one point Mrs. Heredia said that it would be difficult to let go of her son when it was time for him to leave as well, and they would worry about all their
children. However, they did indicate that letting go of their daughter was difficult. Specifically Mr. Heredia stated, “Aveces es un poquito más difícil, le da un poquito más de pendiente por que no se pensamos que las mujeres tienen más riesgos que un baron.” [Sometimes it is a bit more difficult, you get a bit more worried because I don’t know, we think that women have more risks than a male.] Mrs. Heredia was worried that women get more affected emotionally than men and consequently this made her be more concerned for her daughter. She states, “La mujer es más, se afecta más con un, cuando se frustra, entonces si también me da, creo que si, el que sea niña es más difícil.” [Women are affected more with, when they are frustrated, then yes also I believe that yes that she is a girl makes it more difficult.]

With regard to gender differences Isabel talked about some things that her family instilled in her or set limits on because of her gender. She talked about her parents setting limits in allowing her to go out and instilling in her the importance of knowing how to cook. She would become upset when she realized that they did not allow her to go out because of her gender and she felt it was unfair. However, regarding cooking, she did not mind learning this skill, even though it was reinforced in her because she is female. She expressed that she enjoys cooking. In the end she felt that having this skill helped her when she moved away from home because it allowed her to eat home cooked meals and avoided eating out which she does not like to do.

Oh like girls stay at home and things like that I mean that aspect yeah I would get mad and I would be like no we are allowed to do anything just like a guy is it doesn’t matter. The whole thing like growing up like a girl needs to know how to cook and I like the whole kitchen thing so that was not a problem learning how to cook.
Isabel also talked about the value her family places on education and felt that in her family the expectation was for all her siblings to continue with their education and go to college no matter what their gender is.

The one after me is also a girl and my brother is still young so they have instilled in him it’s important for you to go to college. So education wise I don’t think they feel the need to really talk much about. Besides it’s important that you do good in school so you can like do good in high school and then go to a good college. But I don’t think its up to the point like to make the differences school wise academically or educationally.

Isabel talked about some of the consejos that her parents gave her. It appears that a lot of them had to do with taking care of herself, being safe and making positive choices. These consejos affected Isabel in her own decision-making on a day to day basis.

My mom would always tell me I can’t be watching you twenty-four, seven, . . . she’s like it’s up to you to follow what we taught you, of what’s right or what’s wrong but it just like the person that you are outside shows who you really are even though I’m not there.

With my mom it was more like okay and I don’t want you out late. I know you are going to be independent, like I guess more like that talk like you know, I know you want to do all these things but be careful, be wise about your choices. If you go out let me know. If you go do this just don’t do anything bad. So more like how I was going to be. Like even though I was going to have my own choices, that they would still like to be aware of where I am and to be conscious about my decisions.

**Staying connected and fostering relationships.** Isabel manages to stay connected with her family when she is living on campus through phone calls, texts, and home visits. Her parents also text and call her but almost never go visit her given her father’s work schedule. She tends to communicate more with her mother than her father. In addition to her parents, she communicates with her siblings from time to time. Isabel also noted that moving away from home has made her develop closer relationships with her parents and
with her sister (with whom she previously did not have a good relationship). For Mr. and
Mrs. Heredia staying connected with their daughter was very important and was one of
the reasons that they encouraged her to stay closer to home when she went to college.
They wanted her to be able to come home and visit and not be so far away in case there
was ever an emergency. For her parents staying closer together would allow them to
continue their close family relationships.

Isabel discussed the multiple ways she stays connected with her family when she
is on campus and the frequency with which she communicates.

With my mom I call home everyday I mean my dad is sometimes working so it’s
like typically when I call my dad is working but he knows I call everyday. But
once he doesn’t talk to me for three or four days he’ll call me, like, and he’s Hey
how are you doing? or he will text me too. My mom will text me, my siblings text
me or message me on Facebook too.

Even though Isabel is in her second year at college, she reports that she continues to call
home “every day sometimes even twice a day.”

Despite the physical distance between Isabel and her family members, the
continuous communication and home visits has brought Isabel closer with some of her
family members than she was prior to her departure to college. Specifically, her
relationships with her sister and with her father are closer. Regarding her relationship
with her sister, Isabel shared the following:

I wouldn’t really talk to my sister, it’s like she started talking to me more you
know, like I can talk to her too if I have anything or if I’m homesick and I don’t
want my mom to know or anything.

Similarly, the relationship with her father deepened, as he was able to be more connected
with his emotions and express them towards Isabel. This father-daughter relationship is
described in more detail in the theme emotional experiences in the transition to college.

Isabel also stays connected with her siblings by helping them with assignments or when they are having problems with their mom or dad. She states, “mainly school related but if they have a personal problem or like if they got in a fight with my mom . . . and I’m just there listening.” Mrs. Heredia also commented on Isabel’s involvement with her siblings saying that she helps her with them when problems occur. Mrs. Heredia states, “también me sirve de complice para ayudar a sus hermanos” [she is also my accomplice in helping her siblings].

Mr. and Mrs. Heredia say they are in constant communication with their daughter and that it usually occurs a few times a day both with texts and phone calls. According to Mrs. Heredia, Isabel will text them good morning when she wakes up and will usually call when she is headed to class and then again in the evening when she is back in her room. If they do not receive a call from her in the evening they will initiate the call but usually wait for Isabel to call. Mrs. Heredia explains how they stay connected day by day when their daughter is on campus.

*Todo el tiempo estamos en contacto telefónico. Ella se levanta y manda un mensaje good morning mami, good morning papi. Y cuando ella va a clases nos da una llamada aunque sea de cinco o diez minutos y nos dice mas o menos la schedule del día, entonces ya sabemos a que horas esperar noticias de ella. Y si no recibimos noticias el me pregunta a mí o yo le pregunto a él y la llamamos. Tratamos de que ella se reporte por que ella lleva su schedule. Ya sabe como tiene su día, ya sabe si tiene exámenes. Pero si ella no esta en comunicación con nosotros. Nosotros le hablamos antes de dormirnos.*

[All the time we are in contact via telephone. She wakes up and sends us a text good morning mommy, good morning daddy. When she leaves to her classes she gives us a call even if it’s five to ten minutes and she tells us her schedule for the day, that way we know when we will hear back from her. And if we don’t hear back from her he asks me or I ask him and then we call her. We try that she reports to us because she knows her schedule and knows how her day is if she has]
exams. But if she is not in communication with us we call her before we go to sleep.]

According to Mrs. Heredia when they know she is having exams, they do not want to bother her with calls and they just ask her to text at night so that they know she is okay. Although this constant communication between Isabel and her parents may be viewed by some as co-dependent, looking at it within the Latino worldview, it is not uncommon for young adults and their parents to remain in frequent contact, despite moving away from home to college. The back and forth communication between Isabel and her parents is comforting to both parties. The parents are glad to hear that their daughter is okay at school and Isabel enjoys hearing from her family members. Furthermore, it allows them to feel like the family unit has not been disturbed as a consequence of the move. Keeping in touch via phone calls and texts fills the void that was left at home and maintains the cultural value of familismo.

Isabel talked about the frequency of her visits home and explained the reasons that it is difficult for her parents to come and visit her. Besides the 3.5-hour distance, her father’s work schedule is very hectic and he gets the weekends off every month and a half. Despite the challenges to go home she managed to visit often.

Freshman year, fall quarter I went a lot, I went maybe like three to four times then after that I went like another 2 to 3 times like for both quarters at the end. And then this year, I would say the same maybe I’ve gone home 4 or 5 times up to now (mid second quarter) besides the breaks. The spring break and Christmas.

Mrs. Heredia talked about her daughter’s home visits and explained that she tries her best to make it home for special occasions such as birthdays. She states the following: “Se enfoca mucho en estar aquí en fechas especiales. Como cumpleanos del papa, de los
hermanos o de mi. Ella se esfuera por estar aqui.” [She focuses a lot in being here on special dates . . . her dad’s birthday, siblings’ birthdays, or my birthday. She strives to be here.] Mr. Heredia also talked about how the family gets very excited when they know she will be coming to visit and how they get sad when she leaves.

Si nos vemos con mas gusto por que aveces duramos un mes dos meses para verla y ya cuando sabemos que va a venir esta el corazonsito estamos contentos (laughs) y ya cuando sabemos que se va ir estamos un poquito tristes.

[Yes we see each other with more enthusiasm because sometimes it has been one month or two to since we saw her and when we know she is coming, our hearts are happy (laughs) and when we know she is leaving we are a bit sad.]

Mrs. Heredia always takes food requests from her daughter and makes her favorite things. Additionally, she packs up multiple meals and freezes them for her to take back to campus. “Ya estoy con las cosas y haciendo comida para que se lleve congelada. Si tratamos, lo que ha cambiado ha sido eso que tratamos de seguir unidos a pesar de la distancia.” [I am ready with the things (groceries), making food so she can take it back frozen, yes we try, what has changed has been that, that we try to stay close despite the distance.]

**Being Latino in higher education.** The theme being Latino in higher education, is from Isabel’s perspective and how she navigates her ethnic identity in an institution where she is a numerical minority. It was important for Isabel to find individuals like herself to whom she could relate and her cousin was instrumental in this process of finding like individuals. Furthermore, she discusses experiencing culture shock, her perception of not being a visible Latina to others, and also a situation that occurred on campus where racist comments against Latinos/as were posted on a campus Facebook account and its effect on her.
Isabel had the advantage of having an older cousin who was already a student at her college. This cousin introduced her to a Latina/o student organization that Isabel joined. It appears that joining this organization was important for Isabel because it allowed her to fit in and be her true self. She states the following about belonging to this organization:

> It was comfortable going to (Latina/o organization) and knowing like just like I’m talking in Spanish and it’s fine if it comes out, they understand me you know, and then, and a lot of them also came from smaller towns so a lot of them they knew like the difference to so it was comfortable like finding my own culture on campus.

Isabel experienced culture shock soon after arriving on campus living among students from different cultures. This was a new experience to her. Specifically, her campus had a large population of Asian students and she indicated that it was a big “culture difference” for her.

> I never grew up around Asians or any in general Asian culture-like places cause . . . so it was just kinda like my friend using chopsticks for this and that I had no idea. You would think it’s like racist or something but there is not even like places close by because its not mainly there is no Asians like maybe I have seen one place in the next town out of my whole area you know.

It appears that she had no exposure to Asian culture in her hometown and it was not until she moved on campus that she began to experience this cultural shift for the first time. Interestingly, at times she had a hard time relating to other Latina/os who had more exposure to Asian culture and they wanted to eat things from the Asian cuisine.

> So food-wise it was different too. Like oh let’s go here, and they want to have a boba (Taiwanese tea drink) and I’m like what’s that? And at first I kinda felt like and its just kind of like excluded in a way even though I wasn’t being excluded but it was like I have no idea what you guys are talking about.
Even around her Latina friends it was hard for her to relate to them when it came to how comfortable they were with the Asian culture and food.

According to Isabel it has been her experience that many people are not sure of her ethnicity upon meeting her in person. Her skin color is fair and her hair is blonde. She further elaborated that upon knowing her ethnicity people treat her slightly different and she feels that it is a form of discrimination.

Somebody tells you like oh your like Hispanic this and that but I mean I think sometimes I have experienced like that discrimination like once they know, since typically they don’t think I’m Hispanic at first. For me its like once they find out it is, like, typically they look down on it. But they don’t really tell you but you can tell. Like I can feel it.

Isabel also talked about an incident that occurred on campus where negative remarks about Latinos were posted on a Facebook page on campus. The comments posted were in response to an announcement that the Latina/o enrollment had increased for the next incoming class. Isabel describes that the posts were examples of discrimination on campus and that they made her feel bad momentarily. Furthermore, the comments were posted anonymously. In regards to this incident she states:

I mean at times when it’s like in moments like those or like things it just kind of makes it harder. I guess, like, oh you know they are just racist, like there just, it doesn’t really matter so at times it puts me down and its harder in trying, like oh supposedly, like everyone is all nice and good but then like they are not. They are stereotypical but that’s like I wouldn’t say that’s in general.

Despite the negative remarks it appears that Isabel tried not to focus too much on the incident and concluded that the negative remarks were made by a few people and perhaps not representative of most students on campus. She continued to be proud of her ethnic identity.
I’m proud of being Latina so it doesn’t change the way like I think I just kind of like I don’t care I'm proud of being Latina so I really don’t care what that one person thought or those few people or at those moments what they think.

**Challenges encountered in college.** Some of the challenges that Isabel has encountered so far in college have to do with being independent, financial troubles, and having transportation issues when she wants to visit home. Isabel’s parents also shared their concerns regarding financial issues as well as the difficulties Isabel encounters with traveling home.

In discussing her college experience, it appears that Isabel had some difficulty dealing with her independence. She came from a home where her parents were strict with her. Going out with friends is something she continues to struggle with and at times regrets turning down invitations. She states, “At times I guess I’d wish sometimes I’d be like oh I should have gone.” At home her parents did not allow her to go out much and they expected that she ask permission. Now that she is in college she is transitioning from asking for permission to letting her parents know where she is planning to go. She wants to keep her parents informed about her whereabouts, although at times it has brought some disagreements with her father. She describes an instance where she wanted to go out dancing and calls home to let them know.

I remember my dad one time I told him oh I’m going clubbing with my cousin and then he would be like no you can’t and then I’d be like why not? Like I never go out you know and it was already like mid through freshman year you know and I was like I'm not going to do anything bad so it’s fine. I’m not twenty-one so I can’t drink and this and that and he’s like no I'm not letting you go to those places. And then it’s like, Dad it’s nothing bad. It’s just dancing, you know. I’m not going to do anything bad and then he’s just like, then my mom is like, no she has to go out you know and my dad is like no I don't give her permission. And I was just like, Dad I'm going to go. I just want you to know because I think in my head, oh what if I don't tell him and then a car accident on the way, and then my
parents would be like, what was she even doing there? you know, and where was she going? So I guess I always like I said, hear them, or thought ahead about it. If I do this and then even though they don't agree and something bad happens now I’d rather let them know even though it’s like I’m not asking but I'm letting you know.

From Isabel’s description of the conversation with her parents, I was able to see how Isabel is attempting to assert her independence with her parents by letting them know as opposed to asking for permission to go out. Her father appears to be having the most difficulty with her independence and is still expecting her to ask for permission when she wants to go out. Her mother is more understanding of her new independence and understands that she has to go out.

Isabel also encountered some financial challenges. She did not want to burden her parents with any additional expenses than the ones they were already taking on. Even though she qualified for work-study her freshman year she hesitated finding a job on campus for fear that work would interfere with her schoolwork.

At first I mean I knew it was hard on my parents financially so I was like trying to adjust to college and get a job and all this I had never worked so it was also kind of hard.

In the end she waited until her second year to work. When it was necessary she did ask her parents for financial support and they always tried to help her with as much as they could.

If I needed money my parents were not able to like say like oh you can, we have all the resource you know, but if I needed anything my dad would be like this check is the house payment and I can’t but I can send you like 100 dollars next check or next week.

Mr. and Mrs. Heredia were under the impression that given their financial situation, their daughter would receive more financial aid than she did. According to them, they had to
contribute a lot more than they had expected. Contributions included money for a meal plan, groceries, school supplies, and for housing in the summer. Additionally, they were scared that their daughter would not be able to finish her degree due to financial difficulties.

A los papas nos asusta mucho que todo el tiempo cuando nos dicen, cuando tu hijo va a una buena universidad, todo el tiempo las personas de alrededor te estan diciendo nadamas se ba ir de oquis por que a la mitad las ayudas no van hacer las mismas y se va tener que regresar por que no va alcanzar.

[As parents, we get scared that all the time when they tell us, when your child goes to a good university, all the time the people around are telling you, she is going to go in vain, because mid-way the help (financial) is not going to be the same, and she is going to have to come back (home) because she is not going to have enough (money).]

They are also concerned that when their second daughter is ready to go to college the expense will be too high for them to afford. Mr. Heredia stated, “la preocupacion es la ayuda financiera en todo momento.” [he worry is financial aid, at all times.] Furthermore, Mrs. Heredia indicated that these financial difficulties affect her daughter deeply because she is a responsible person and does not want to burden them financially.

Para ella como primera de ir al colegio y como hija de un hogar de bajos ingresos y es una persona muy responsable a ella le lastima le duele mucho tener que pedirle dinero a su papa por que sabe que no hay dinero extra.

[For her as the first to go to college and for a daughter from a low income home, she is a very responsible person and it hurts her, it pains her to have to ask her father for money because she knows there is no extra money.]

Another challenge that Isabel encountered had to do with the lack of transportation when she wanted to go and visit home for the weekend. Not having a car made this task difficult. She avoided the bus when she learned through experience that they were unreliable and took too long to make it to her destination. She would ask friends that lived relatively close to her hometown to give her a ride when they would go home and
she helped them pay for gas. It was hard for her to plan her home visits when she was depending on others for transportation. She describes the bus experience as follows.

I would be like it's not even that far three and a half or four hours depending on traffic you know, it's not too far and you don't have a car so you have to depend on other people and the bus takes like ten hours cause I have done it.

**Jack Nieto and Family**

A total of five themes were derived from the interviews with Jack and his parents. The interview with Jack was coded first, followed by the coding of the parent interview. All codes were then sorted and put into groups. The groups were collapsed until they could not be reduced anymore. In the end, a total of five groups resulted in the themes that emerged and that represent the voices of Jack and his parents. The six themes that emerge in this case include the following: (a) emotional transition to college, (b) adjusting as a Latino in higher education, (c) types of support experienced in college, (d) cultural values in higher education, (e) staying connected with family, and (f) challenging college experiences. This case presentation begins with a case description that includes three sections; family background, family educational history, and a brief overview on the experience of support. After the case presentation, each theme is discussed in detail with supporting quotes.

**Family background.** The Nieto family lives in an urban city on the west coast that has a high Latino population. Mr. and Mrs. Nieto have been living as a couple for 23 years. They have 3 children together, 1 male and 2 females. Jack is the eldest of his siblings. He is 21 years old and is the first in his family to go to college and move away from home. Following Jack is his middle sister who is 19 years old. She recently started
college and also moved away from home. The youngest sibling is 5 years old and is attending elementary school. She is the only child living at home at the present time.

Mr. Nieto is 41 years old. He first was brought to the U.S. with his family as a young boy around the age of 6. He attended school in the U.S. and completed first and second grade. He returned to Mexico with his family and did not come back to the U.S. until 1985. He has been living in the U.S. for approximately 29 years. Mrs. Nieto is also 41 years old. Unlike her partner, she came to the U.S. for the first time in 1991, at the age of 18 with her mother and brother. Her father had been living in the U.S. for approximately 6 years before they came.

Mr. Nieto works in a textile company where he is both a driver and works shipping and receiving. He has worked in the same company for 23 years. A few months after arriving from Mexico, Mrs. Nieto began working as a seamstress on and off until the birth of her second child. After that she worked in fast food restaurants part time. In 2001 she began working full time in food services at local schools. Currently, she is working as a cafeteria manager at a large school district on the west coast.

**Family educational history.** Jack is the first in his family to go and pursue a college education at a 4-year institution. His younger sister followed in his footsteps 2 years later making her the second person in her family to enroll in college. A large age gap exists between Jack and his youngest sister who is currently in Kindergarten.

Mr. and Mrs. Nieto had different educational experiences in Mexico. Mrs. Nieto was able to attend school and graduated from high school where she learned a trade. She explains that some of her siblings were able to go to trade school but none went to
Mr. Nieto began his education in Mexico but came to the U.S. as a young child where he attended first and second grade. He moved back to Mexico and continued his education until grade 7. He did not complete high school. Once he came back to the U.S. at the age of 13, he did not pursue his education any further but instead began working. As an adult Mrs. Nieto also came to the U.S. for work. After some time living in the U.S. she began taking English classes to learn the language but was forced to stop taking them due to work demands at the time. Later on through her employment in the cafeteria at a school and due to a change in policy she had to present proof of a high school degree to maintain her position. Consequently, she was caught in a situation in which she had to complete her GED in a short span of time.

Experiences of support. Jack received different types of support from his family when he left to college. From a young age Jack was encouraged by his parents to pursue a college degree. He was a good student and was interested in continuing his education beyond high school. His motivation was to make his family proud of him as well as to gain a better future for himself. On the other hand, his family had the expectation that he would continue his education beyond high school not only for his own good but because he was the eldest child. As the eldest child he would serve as a role model for his younger siblings. The family’s expectation did not appear to hinder him in any way, mostly because it aligned with his own personal goals. Jack describes both parents as very supportive of his educational endeavors. Given his father’s busy work schedule, his mother was most involved in his day-to-day school activities and also showed interest in his plans to pursue higher education.
In addition to the emotional support they always provided for their son, Mr. and Mrs. Nieto provided financial support. For over a year, they paid for his rent and other expenses that his financial aid package did not cover. Although this extra cost was something they were not expecting, they managed to cover the expense. Other ways his parents showed their support were through their visits to campus, bringing him his favorite home cooked meals, or just picking him up from campus when he wanted to go visit on the weekends.

Mr. and Mrs. Nieto were very proud of their son’s accomplishments and always let him know how they felt about him being the first in the family to go to college. They always had words of encouragement urging him to move forward and not give up on his dreams. Although it was difficult for them when he left to go to college, they never tried to dissuade him from moving out. Mr. and Mrs. Nieto understood that it was in his best interest to move out and they wanted him to be successful. Jack learned that he could always count on his parents whether he needed financial or emotional support or even just a ride home.

Emergent themes.

*Emotional transition to college.* The theme emotional transition to college describes the emotional process of leaving home and saying goodbye. Both Jack and his parents describe this journey as one that brought out an emotional response from each of them. This was particularly significant for Jack to experience because he had never seen this side of his father.
Figure 3. The Nieto family.
Mrs. Nieto describes being happy that her son was going to college but states that she felt sad and empty when the time came for Jack to leave. “El día que lo dejamos, ya, ha, y aunque estaba en una buena área, pero ya el vacío quedaba aquí.” [The day we went to drop him off, oh, even though he was in a good area, but the emptiness stayed here.] Furthermore, after he was gone for a few months Mr. Nieto talked to her about letting her son go and figuratively cutting the umbilical cord. She states, “Me hizo cortar el cordon umbilical muy drásticamente.” [He made me cut the umbilical cord very drastically.] She talks about how difficult the process of letting go was for her and how she would show up unexpectedly to pick him up or to visit.

A mi si me costo mas trabajo como dejarlo ir. Haveces yo llegaba sin avisarle y me decia, Mom pero hoy no pensaba ir a la casa. O lo encontraba durmiendo, entonces el me dijo no dejalo que te hable cuando el quiera venir a la casa. Y a mi me costo mas.

[For me it was harder to let him go. Sometimes I would get there without letting him know ahead of time and he would tell me, Mom but today I wasn’t thinking of going home. Or I would find him asleep, so then he (husband) told me, no let him call you when he wants to come home. It was more difficult for me.]

When the day came that they actually went to drop Jack off at campus Mrs. Nieto described becoming very tearful even though she had wanted not to shed a tear.

Hay un llanto de lagrimas ahi, un mar de lagrimas, porque yo dije no voy a llorar, no voy a llorar pero ya cuando lo dejamos en la puerta, no habia llorado, pero empezo a llorar mi hija mayor ya despues todos hay, llore y llore porque ya lo dejabamos ahi era el primero que salia de la casa. Una semana antes no pero ya el dia que ya fisicamente se fue, si.

[It was just a cry, full of tears there, a sea of tears because I told myself I’m not going to cry. I’m not going to cry, but when we left him there at the door I hadn’t cried but then my daughter started to cry and then everyone cried because we had just left him there and he was the first one to leave the house. The week before he left no but the day that he physically left, yes.]
Mr. Nieto reflects on how he felt when his son left and having a discussion with a close friend about how he was feeling at the time:

*Yo me sentía más triste, porque ya se iba mi hijo por eso, se siente pues, como que ya me había quedado un poco muy solo. Todo el tiempo habíamos estado todos juntos y un día de pronto se va, pues como que no. Me decía un amigo, lo tienes contigo, no se murió, ahí está, esta en la escuela solamente esta estudiando.*

[I felt more sad because my son was leaving. That is why it felt like I had already been left somewhat very alone. We had been together all the time and one day all of a sudden he leaves. Well no, my friend would tell me he is with you. He hasn’t died. He is there. He is at school only studying.]

For Jack the experience of leaving home to begin a new chapter in his life as a college student was one of excitement and anxiety. He recalled not being emotional until he was on campus and that is when the reality set in for him. He describes it in the following manner:

*I want to say anxious like (feeling), I wanted to be part of the university so I mean I wasn’t really nervous about going to a university . . . I don’t think I felt anything the weeks leading up. I didn’t really feel anything until I was already on campus. That was when everything hit me (laughs) like a ton of bricks. Cause then that’s when I felt like I’m going to be on my own. This is where I mature as an adult.*

Furthermore, he described feeling rushed at the end in getting all his things together. Overall, however, he felt that his family was happy for his accomplishment of being the first in his family to go to a university. He describes his family’s emotions in the following manner: “Bittersweetness because they were proud of me and happy that I made it, but sad cause I was leaving the nest, leaving the household.” Jack also talked about the ride to campus and the mood in the car on the drive there. He describes this as a joyous occasion. Things changed when it was time to say goodbye and this is when all the family members began to feel emotional.
Ah, so on the ride to campus it was (inaudible) . . . we were kinda happy, excited but when it got time for me to stay and leave, um, that is when like emotions started coming out hugging each other, ah, like saying they were proud of me.

**Adjusting as a Latino in higher education.** This theme describes the adjustment process that Jack experienced as he began his education on campus as an ethnic minority student. It includes some factors that Jack saw as helpful to his adjustment process as well as the role his ethnic identity played in the adjustment process. Jack also talks about how he became aware that he had adjusted to campus. Additionally under this theme, Jack’s parents discuss their perception of Jack’s adjustment process.

Jack describes getting adjusted to campus as overall a good experience. He recalls noticing a difference between his hometown and the university he was attending, noting that he grew up surrounded by Latinos in his community and that his university was not predominantly Latino. Given that he was in his third year at the time of the interview he felt he had done well adjusting because he was still enrolled at the university. Jack describes his adjustment in the following manner:

I’d say it’s been good cause I’m still here. So um, yeah, everything is good. This college is different from my hometown. In a lot of ways I feel like I can be myself here and I don’t feel like I have to drastically change myself in any form of way. So I feel like I can be me and I can express myself in any way I want here.

Jack also described having friends from home attend the same university as helpful in his adjustment to college, especially because he describes himself as introverted. “I have to say my friends being here, cause I’m not, most of the time, I’m really quiet and reserved, so having people that I already knew here really helped me adjust to the university.”
Jack also talked about the role his family had in his adjustment process. He indicates that his parents positively impacted his adjustment process by keeping connected with him through phone calls, having conversations in Spanish, and also by bringing him his favorite food.

I think with the phone calls it helped me hear that Spanish, because here . . . you don’t really hear that Spanish so that really helped me out. It helped me settle into college. And then the food that my mom brought me, it would always be like King Taco, a Mexican restaurant, or my mom’s cooking which was Mexican so that helped me get that food from my culture to me and not craving the taste of it.

Once Jack was living on campus and had attended some classes he became more culturally aware of his ethnicity. It appears that knowing he was a numerical minority on campus had an effect on him and he talks about having to overcome being one of a few or the only Latino in his class and using this to his advantage.

I think one of the problems that I kind of see, (is that) I don’t see Hispanic or Latinos. Cause coming from a very dominantly Latino community and coming here where there is a whole bunch of, um, Whites and Asians, it’s noticeable that I’m kind of different than the person to my left or to my right, either by like my nationality or just the way I dress or the way my skin color differs from theirs. So they are just very noticeable for me which was something that I had to overcome, kind of like, cause, like, I’m the only one in this row or section that is noticeably Hispanic. So for me, I had to overcome that.

Realizing he was a numerical minority on campus, Jack felt the need to prove that he belonged on campus. He states that he feels he put this on himself and that it was not imposed by others. “I think it came from me . . . sort of thing to prove to myself that I belong here that I am educated and that I wasn’t like a fluke or anything like that.” However, realizing he was one of a few initially was difficult for him. He describes this in the following excerpts.
At first I would say kind of negative cause I didn’t really see a lot of other Latinos in, like, classes or on campus. But as the time went by, I kind of turned it around and, be like, if I’m the only Latino I’m going to make sure that I’m, you know, at least (inaudible) of the class or at least prove to you that I am educated. I overcame it by using that awareness to kind of, like, help to, like, push me to study more. For me, it was, like, I’m going to prove to myself and prove to the people around me that I’m educated, so everybody helped push me.

The self-awareness that Jack had of being one of a few Latinos in his classes could have affected him negatively, but rather than focusing on it in a negative way, Jack used this as a motivator to push himself to do well academically.

Jack also describes how he knew he had adjusted to college life on campus. It happened after he had completed his first year. He noticed a difference in how he felt coming back on campus in comparing his first year with coming back for his second year.

Mm, I think a year after I started, so by second year or so, cause I remember freshman year coming whenever I go back and the ride to campus I would get kinda anxious, I would get nervous a bit because of like entering a different sphere. But now its more like I'm just coming back home. I don't feel nervous. I don't feel worried. I don’t feel any of those feelings. I just feel comfortable.

In addition to feeling like campus was home on his drive back, Jack was aware he had made the adjustment when he was able to walk around campus on his own and feel comfortable doing so. He states:

I think I knew that I adjusted to college when I was able to walk to the library by myself and go get food by myself or the point where I became comfortable with the campus, that’s when I knew that I became adjusted.

Mr. and Mrs. Nieto also discussed their perceptions of Jack’s adjustment to campus life. Both expressed feeling that Jack had already adjusted to life on campus and that this process had not been difficult. Mr. Nieto stated that he felt his son had adjusted because in their conversations Jack would tell him he was doing well and never spoke
about having problems. He stated the following. “Nadamas me dice que esta bien, que no hay problemas” [He only tells me that he is well, that there are no problems.] Mrs. Nieto expressed that she felt that Jack adjusted to college after he had been there for about a year and a half because she felt he was more mature and was able to resolve a lot of things on his own.

Yo pienso que en el primer año, como en el año y medio cuando el ya miro como resolver las cosas solo el ya, ya se miraba mas maduro, como ya no es un juego como que ya esta mas serio en lo que el quiere en su carrera.

[I think that the first year, like the first year and a half, when he knew how to resolve things on his own, he was more mature, like it was not a game, like he was more serious about what he wanted, his career.]

**Staying connected with family.** The theme of staying connected with family describes how Jack and his family stay in each other’s life despite the distance. Both discuss the frequency of communication, home visits, and how moving away from home has affected their relationships. Overall, it appears that Mr. and Mrs. Nieto’s relationship with their son has strengthened and they feel closer to him than before when he was still living at home.

According to Jack, the fact that his college campus is less than an hour away from his hometown made it possible for him to visit home on the weekends and for his parents to come and visit him when he could not go home. Additionally, if he ever needed anything, he knew he could call home and his parents would be able to come and help him or bring him what he needed. Regarding his home visits, Jack indicates that they were more frequent in the beginning of his college education and as time went by, he went home less often. “First year was more, it occurred more, and as the years went by I just stopped going home as often.” Jack also talked about relying on his parents for
transportation. Most of the time, his mom would go pick him up from campus when he wanted to go home. His mom would often come and visit and drop off things he needed such as his favorite foods. Jack explains this in the following excerpt:

My mom would drop me off food or, um, cause my mom always picked me up so I already, it (inaudible) wasn’t like two separate worlds. It was just kind of like a home away from home. So if I wanted to go back and see my family I could do that any weekend. So with that in my mind it gave me ease where I’m not that far from home . . . not alone.

It appears that living relatively close to home helped Jack to feel that he was still connected with his family and only a short drive away. Mr. and Mrs. Nieto made themselves available to Jack if he ever needed a ride or anything else, which facilitated their continued contact.

In addition to going home some weekends, Jack would maintain contact with his family through phone calls and texts. He noted that his father even learned how to use facetime, a feature on some cell phones that allows one to make video calls to other individuals who have the same feature on their phones. Using this, his father could see him while they talked. It appears that Jack was amused and happy that his dad had learned how to use this technology to keep in contact. Regarding his communication with his father, he stated the following. “Sometimes my dad facetimes me (laughs) which is funny so we stay connected through technology.”

Jack also talked about how his parents showed interest in knowing his schedule and when he would be free. They always tried to include him in family outings by taking his schedule into account, which made Jack feel that they wanted to spend time with him.
My parents were questioning my schedule, my class schedule. It tells me that they want to see me and they want me to be home with them to celebrate events with them. So everything tells me that it's love and they care for me and that they want me to be able to partake in, like, family events.

Finally, Jack talked about feeling closer to his family members since going to college. It appears that it opened up his communication with his father and he sees the effort they put to stay connected with him. Regarding his relationships with family members, he states:

I feel closer to them. I feel closer to my mom, feel closer to my sister cause we are talking about college. I feel closer to my dad because we are hugging and, like, we are telling each other we love each other. Before we never did.

Similar to what Jack experienced regarding to his relationship with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Nieto also expressed feeling like their relationship with their son had grown. Additionally, Mrs. Nieto indicated that she felt that Jack’s relationship with his youngest sister also grew. He became protective of her and acted as an additional father figure due to the large age difference between them. She stated the following. “El es ahora es como mas protector . . . la cuida mucho, el ya se convierte como el segundo papa.” [He is now more protective . . . he looks after her a lot, he has turned into a second dad (to her).] The relationship with his other sister had always been close and it has continued that way. She is in her first year of college this year and Mrs. Nieto reports that they communicate via texts. Additionally, they see each other when they go home on the weekends.

Mrs. Nieto talked about the frequency of home visits occurring more often in the beginning of Jack’s stay in college. As the time went on they became less frequent. Additionally she reflected on her own process of wanting to go pick him up or visit him each week and then having to pull back and give her son more privacy.
El primer año, es más los primeros seis meses yo quería ir cada semana ya después me dijeron no yo lo tuve que desligar como, como, no to be to attached to him, like let it go, y después el empeso a venir cada mes, cada holiday, y después tardo el año pasado no vino más que dos veces por que se quedo en summer school. Entonces casi no vino tanto.

[The first year, the first six months I wanted to go each week. Later they told me, no, and I had to separate from him, like let it go, and then he started coming each month, then each holiday and then he delayed coming home. Last year he only came twice because he took summer school. So then he did not come home as much.]

The communication via telephone calls and text occurred every other day. On weeks when this did not happen, Mrs. Nieto made sure to call her son on Fridays to check how he was doing and if he needed to be picked up. Mrs. Nieto also talked about the nature of the calls with her son and described that she was always very emotionally expressive with him and she felt that he was never embarrassed to correspond in the same manner. She states the following:

Tengo la costumbre de que para todo, si papi, si amor, o con palabras de cariño y ahora pienso que también el no, no se incluso no se avergüenza en desir okay mami yo te amo, no esconde sus sentimientos.

[I have the habit that for everything, I say, ‘yes honey, my love’ or with loving words and now I think that he also, I don’t know, he doesn’t shy away and he says, ‘okay mommy I love you.’ He doesn’t hide his emotions.]

Mr. Nieto talked about his communication with Jack and stated that he usually texts more than calling him. However, he will call him from time to time. Additionally, he reflected on the time he is not able to spend with him now that he is away and says that in looking back, he wished he hadn’t worked long hours, because that kept him away from his son. “Si yo podria cambiar algo pues cambiaria el tiempo, trabajo yo doce horas, cambiara yo el tiempo pa estar mas tiempo con el. [If I could change something, well I would change the time, I work 12-hour days I would change the time so that I
could spend more time with him.] He further elaborated that it was also in the best interest of his family’s finances that he work long hours. For Mr. Nieto, it appears that having his son leave home made him reflect on his relationship with him and about how there now are less opportunities for the family to spend time together. Mrs. Nieto said that although they do not spend that much time together, the time they do spend is “quality time.”

**Types of support given and received.** Both Mr. and Mrs. Nieto talked about the types of support they felt they had provided to their son and how it had changed over time. Jack talked about those individuals in his life who provided support to him while he moved away to college. Among those he discussed are his parents who provided him with multiple types of support. In addition to his parents, Jack gives credit to his high school friends who also went to the same university, and the role they played in his support system.

The support that was provided by Mr. and Mrs. Nieto is best described as emotional, financial support and physical support. Throughout his stay on campus his family has always supported him in different ways. The emotional support comes in the words of encouragement that they give him and in always telling him how proud they are of him and that they believe he can succeed. For example, Mr. Nieto would reinforce in him the following: “En decirle de su autoestima, que el ya esta ahí es su logro y que no piense o se deje intimidar a que tu no puedes hacer eso, no tu lo puedes hacer.” [In talking to him about self-esteem, that he is already there (at the university) and not to think or let anyone intimidate you and tell you that you can’t do it. No, you can do it].
Additionally, his parents wanted him to know that he always had a place at home and
they would keep his room for him and not remodel it for his younger sister. Mrs. Nieto
states the following: “O tal ves en hacerle sentirse seguro . . . mi esposo le dijo no mijo
ese va ser tu cuarto y aunque la hermanita estuviera no se lo iba a quitar.” [Or maybe in
making him feel secure . . . my husband told him, no son that will be your room and even
though your little sister is here she won’t take it from you.]

They also tried to encourage him by giving him their own life examples of
struggle. For example, Mr. Nieto would talk to him about working long hours for only a
little above minimum wage. “Mirame a mi no vayas acabar en un trabajo de doce horas
y ganando casi el mínimo, busca algo mejor de lo que yo tengo, pero el dice no, yo voy a
ganar más que tu (laughs).” [Look at me. Don’t end up in a job where you have to work
12-hour shifts and getting paid almost minimum wage. Look for something better than
what I have. And he would say no I am going to earn more money than you (laughs)].

Mrs. Nieto would also encourage him by telling him about her experience of having to
complete her GED in a short amount of time. She explained this in the following excerpt:

Si yo lo hice como mama, porque yo le dicia yo hice el GED en 6 meses por que
dee mes clases de ingles por el trabajo y luego por que me lo requería el distrito
tenía que tener yo un high school diploma o un equivalente y le dije y yo en seis
meses lo hice y por que tu no puedes acabar una carrera.

[If I did it as a mom, because I told him, I completed the GED in 6 months
because I had to leave my English classes due to work and then because my work
required, the (school) district required that I have a high school diploma or
equivalent and I told him, in 6 months, I did it and why shouldn’t you be able to
finish your career.]

Most of the financial support provided by Mr. and Mrs. Nieto was due to a
problem Jack encountered with his financial aid package in which a discrepancy in the
information provided did not allow him to receive financial aid for his dormitory expenses. At one point Jack was concerned that he would not be able to continue with his education due to the circumstances of his financial aid package.

Y el decía que no, que ya no iva a poder que lo iban a sacar y le dije no aqui no te caes, existen tartjetas de credito, y lo presionamos a el a que tambien sacara un student loan y todo tardo no lo hizo, supuestamente que no calificaba por que nosotros habiamos pagado ya una parte.

[And he said that no that he would not be able to, that they would kick him out, and I told him no, you will not fall, there are credit cards and we also pressured him to get a student loan, but it took a while and he did not do it, supposedly that he did not qualify beause we had already paid one part.]

Mrs. Nieto described what they helped pay when the financial aid package did not cover all the college expenses. “Si nosotros pagamos parte de la diferencia, pagamos toda la renta y pagamos el summer school todavía.” [Yes we paid the difference, we paid all the rent and we paid the summer school also.]

Mrs. Nieto also talked about providing her son with physical support. She described that physical support included teaching her son how to cook so he was prepared when he moved away from home. Under this description of physical support I would also add the support they provided him by taking him and picking him up from campus whenever he needed a ride. This has continued even now that he is in his third year. Jack does not own a vehicle and does not rely on other friends for rides. Now that Jack’s older sister started college, it has become more difficult for Mr. and Mrs. Nieto to juggle picking up and dropping off two college kids that live in opposite directions from their home. At times each parent takes one back to campus but at other times Mrs. Nieto has to make the lengthy car trip and drop both off.
La transportacion si se ha complicado por que hay veces que nos tenemos que dividir porque uno va hacia al norte y el otro hacia el sur. O si yo los tengo que llevar tengo que estar tres horas y media afuera.

[The transportation, has gotten complicated because sometimes we have to divide because one (parent) drives north and the other south. Or if I have to take them I have spend 3 hours and a half out.]

In discussing his family, Jack indicated that the love and support from his family was very important to him and that his family gave him motivation to move forward. He talked about being the first in his family to go to college and how that motivated him to get his degree because he wanted to give this “gift” to his family.

I think the biggest motivation for me to finish college besides getting a job is getting that diploma cause I remember in 8th grade algebra my teacher told me that the greatest gift you can give your parents is a college diploma and that really stuck with me. So that motivation to present them my diploma really drives me to succeed.

Furthermore, Jack knew that he could count on his family for anything he needed. He stated, “all along I knew they would be there” and “I knew that cause if I had the support I could overcome the challenge. So I kept the challenge with me and reminding myself that I’m loved and supported, which helped me overcome any challenges that I had.” Jack recalls his mother providing him with support by telling him the following: “Go do everything you need to do. Don't hold yourself back. Don't let anyone hold you back.” This type of support was particularly important to Jack in times where he had doubts of succeeding at the university. “Whenever I feel like I couldn't make it here (on campus) they always brought up the notion that I can make it, that I made it this far and I can make it further.” So it seems that having his parents believe in his ability to succeed and receiving support from them was a great motivator for Jack.
A specific example of support from his parents that Jack recalled happened during his first week on campus when he realized he needed detergent for his clothes. He was new to campus and without a source of transportation, and his parents came to the rescue. Although bringing him detergent may seem trivial, it appears to hold significance for Jack because it reinforced the idea that his parents were unconditionally supportive of him and they were willing to come and help him when he needed it.

I felt happy cause it showed to me that they cared and they loved me and they were willing to make the hour drive to support me even if it was just laundry detergent. Um it really shows me that they would do anything for me to help me out.

Another example of support that appeared to be significant to Jack included trips that were made to campus where his mother would bring him home-cooked meals or buy him his favorite Mexican food. He states the following regarding these displays of support:

For me it was kind of like it shows that they care enough to go pick, to buy the food or make the food and bring it to me, so it shows me that they care and they care about me that I don’t go hungry and that I don’t miss out on my favorite foods, home cooked or store bought.

Jack also talked about the continued support he receives from his parents even now that he is in his third year. More recently his parents showed him their support when they accepted his choice in changing his major in the sciences to one in humanities. Jack discovered that his science major was not a good fit and found something else that interested him. “They um support me from changing my major. Um they supported me for that, so they support me taking like summer school or taking a lot of classes.” Mr. and
Mrs. Nieto appear to respect their son’s educational decisions and provide him with encouragement and support that is vital for him to move forward with his education.

Jack discussed the important role his friends had in providing support to him while on campus. He describes this is the following excerpt:

The love and support from your peers whether it be your roommate, classmate, or someone you met like through a club I think that really helps you out cause that gets rid of the idea that you are here alone, that you are never going to meet anyone to be friends with. So having people around you really helps you to have a positive vibe about college.

*Cultural values and higher education.* This theme represents the cultural values that the family transmitted to Jack growing up and the ones that he felt resonated with him while he transitioned to college. Embedded with these cultural values are the *consejos* that his parents provided Jack when he left for college. Jack discusses the values that he felt were most important to him. Additionally, both Jack and his parents reflect on their perception of gender differences in their family as it pertains to leaving for college.

As the oldest child in his family, Jack explained that his parents always wanted him to be a role model to his younger siblings. Jack shared that both parents wanted “me to go to college so I can be a role model to my sisters.” He describes that having this expectation put on him was “Not so much pressure but it was expectation, certain expectation but not as much pressure.” Jack did not interpret the expectation in a negative way and did not perceive any implications on him from the expectation.

Furthermore, Jack felt that the values his parents instilled in him fit with his college goals. He states the following: “Yes, um, I feel that they feel that they gave me the right values for college which is true cause I refer to my family values to help me
succeed in college.” Specifically, he talked about the value of working hard. It was part of the advice given to him by his parents. “Them telling me to really like try like put in the work here at the university to study hard.” Additionally, Jack talked about a phrase his mom would tell him growing up that made an impact on him and his view of education.

My mom would always say, those that want to study will study and that really stuck with me as a little kid cause I always wanted to study, um, and I always wanted to go to the university to further my studies.

Jack also talked about the messages he received compared to those received by his younger sister (2 years younger) who just started college this academic year. Jack stated that in regards to education he did not feel that he received a different message than his sister. They were both encouraged to pursue higher education. “No, my sister got the same kind of messages, to study hard to go for it, um, do whatever you have to do to succeed.” He further elaborated on the response his parents had when his sister was accepted to college. “It was her getting into college and my parents being proud because my mother didn’t have the support for her to go to college, so she made sure that we had the support to go to college.” The only gender difference he experienced growing up with his sister was in the social realm and the freedom to go out.

Yes cause growing up whenever I went out my parents like more accepted it and whenever my sister went out they kind of gave her a little speech, kinda like be careful to watch herself, to see who she surrounds herself with. So I think being male did give me a different experience growing up.

Overall, Jack felt that the cultural values and advice he received from his parents were beneficial for him as he transitioned from home to college. “They aided cause I had
to be strong especially the first year here alone. Um, I don’t think it hindered my experience here.”

Mr. and Mrs. Nieto discussed some of the consejos (advice) they gave to their son upon his departure from home to college.

“Pues practicamente que se cuidara mucho.” [Well basically to take care of himself.] In addition to taking care of himself, she also told him not to get distracted by girls because they would “que le perturbaba la mente y que nos se iba a concentrar” [Perturb his mind and he would not be able to concentrate.] Similarly, Mr. Nieto also advised him “que se cuidara de las muchachas que estudiara, que fuera, que valla hacer lo que tenga que hacer, estudia primero y despues a divertirse mas, pero ahorita a estudiar por lo pronto.” [To take care of himself from young ladies, to study. To do what he needed to do, study first and then have fun. But for now study.] Furthermore, Mrs. Nieto recalls a funny anecdote that occurred when Jack was beginning his second year on campus. She stated the following.

El segundo año el vivia en el cuatro piso y estaba su ventana hacia la pool y luego le deciamos que no mirara nada de ahi, . . . Y mi esposo le hacia burla y le decia que iba a llevar una madera y que le iva tapar la ventana para que no mirara las muchachas (laughs).

In his second year he lived in the fourth floor and his window was overlooking the pool and then we told him not to look down there. . . . And my husband would tease him and tell him he was going to take a piece of wood to cover his window so that he would not be looking down at the young ladies (laughs).

Mrs. Nieto also gave him advice regarding problem solving. “Yo si hable con el le dije que no se desesperara que siempre buscara la solucion, que si una pureta se cierra otras se abren, y hay que no ahogarse en un vaso de agua.” [I did talk to him, and told
him not to be impatient. To always look for a solution, if one door closes another one opens and that he should not drown in a glass of water."

Regarding gender differences, Mrs. Nieto did talk about it being more difficult for her emotionally to let her daughter go to college than it was to let her son. She attributed this to her daughter’s gender and indicated that she still has the mindset that men can take care of themselves. She stated the following. “Atodavia tenemos la mentalidad de que como es hombre se cuida solito.” [We still have the mindset that since he is a man he can take care of himself.] On the other hand, Mr. Nieto indicated that having the second child, in this case his daughter, move out to go to college was easier than when Jack left because he was the first to separate from the family.

Additionally, Mrs. Nieto recognized that now that Jack is in college she treats him more as an adult who is responsible for his actions and choices and less like the child that lived in her home.

_Ya ahorita por nuestra parte todo el trabajo estuvo hecho. Ya si el caia en otra cosa era ya su decision. Pero el miedo ya ahí ya no, como que dices ya esta etapa de la Universidad ya piensa exactamente que quiere._

[Now, on our behalf, all the work is done. If he stumbles into something (negative), it’s his decision. But the fear, it’s not there, like at this new stage at the university, he knows what he wants.]

**Challenging college experiences.** Challenging college experiences was a theme that described two experiences that caused some anxiety and worry in both Jack and his parents. The first one was related to problems in his financial aid application, which ultimately affected his financial aid package. The second had to do with concerns that Mr. and Mrs. Nieto had regarding who would be their son’s roommate.
The financial aid problem that Jack encountered brought some tension with his parents. It appears that Jack was frustrated with his parents because they had not fixed a discrepancy that existed with his father’s social security card. Mrs. Nieto explains the financial aid problem as follows.

*Fue en el segundo año. En el primer año yo lo arregle por que llenmos el FAFSA . . . y yo no le dije el cumpleanos de tu papa esta equivocado (tenian el dia cirrecti pero el mes equivocado). . . . En el segundo ano fue cuando el lo lleno y estaba mal y entonces ya fuimos ya tuvimos que ir de emergencia al seguro social cambiar toda la informacion mandarlo al IRS el IRS nos tuvo que mandar los transcripts y ya lo sometio. Pero el primer semestre no le cubrio a el.*

[It was during his second year. The first year I fixed it because we filled out the FAFSA (together) . . . and I did not tell him that his father’s birthday was incorrect (they had the correct day but the wrong month). . . . His second year was when he filled it out on his own (FAFSA) and it was incorrect and then we (parents) had to go urgently to the social security office to fix the information and then send it to the IRS and the IRS had to send us the transcripts and we submitted them (to Financial Aid). But he did not receive aid his first quarter.]

Mr. Nieto further elaborated about his son’s emotional reaction to the financial aid problem. “*Un dia que nos reclamo enojado, que por que no habia arreglado ese problema.* “ [One day he was upset and confronted us, asking why we hadn’t fixed the problem.]. In the end, his mother told him not to worry that they would do what they had to do to keep him in college. His parents were prepared to take a loan to cover the costs if necessary.

The second concern was regarding Jack’s roommate. His parents appeared to be worried about who would ultimately be sharing a room with their son. They were concerned that he may have problems with a roommate or that they would not get along. Mr. Nieto stated the following: “*Uno esta preocupado por que a lo mejor le toca no se . . . de otro raza por que aveces son muy racistas o no se, pero ya cuando supimos que era su*
amigo, pues ya, mas tranquilos” [we are worried because maybe he gets, I don’t know . . . someone of another race, because sometimes they can be racists or I don’t know, but when we found out that it was his friend, well then we were at peace]. Similarly Mrs. Nieto indicated having “peace of mind” when she knew that her son’s roommate was a friend from high school. Jack did not report having any roommate concerns. In fact, he was excited when he moved on campus and it was not until he arrived on campus that he was anxious and the reality of him beginning college hit him “like a ton of bricks.”

Jazzel Medina and Family

A total of six themes were derived from the interviews with Jazzel and her parents. Similar to the previous case, the student interview was coded first, followed by the coding of the parent interview. All codes were then sorted and put into groups. The groups were collapsed until they could not be reduced anymore. In the end, a total of six groups resulted in the themes that emerged, representing the voices of Jazzel and her parents. The six themes that emerge in this case include the following: (a) feelings associated with the transition to college, (b) cultural values and higher education, (c) types of support given and received, (d) strategies for positive college adjustment, (e) finding my place in college, soy Latina, and (f) challenges in the college experience.

Family background. Jazzel grew up in a desert community on the west coast of the U.S. She was raised by her paternal grandparents from a very young age, after her biological father passed away. She refers to her grandparents as “Mom and Dad.” Mr. and Mrs. Medina became the legal guardians of Jazzel and her brother when their son passed away. They began the adoption process and eventually became the adoptive
parents of Jazzel and her older brother around the year 2000. Growing up, Jazzel recalls being confused about the relationships in her family. It appears that she believed her grandparents were her biological parents. From my interview with Jazzel, it was suggested that her grandparents were not too open in discussing the family relationships and, at times, would give her conflicting information. For example, Jazzel recalls going to the cemetery to visit a grave and Mrs. Medina would tell her that her Dad was there, but she didn’t fully understand because she thought Mr. Medina was her father. Furthermore, Mr. and Mrs. Medina would refer to their biological children as her siblings. Adding to the confusion was being aware that she had a younger brother who was adopted by one of her biological aunts, that Jazzel referred to as her cousin (the younger brother was not aware he was adopted). It was not until Jazzel was in eighth grade that they directly addressed the issue of her adoption and her father’s death. Prior to this, she was under the impression that she was the youngest in a very large family. She thought her aunts and uncles were her sisters and brothers. After her adoptive parents discussed her father’s death and her adoption, she chose to refer to her adoptive brothers and sisters as her aunts and uncles.

Jazzel reports that she does not maintain a relationship with her biological mother. Her biological mother is aware of Jazzel’s living arrangement. At one point, she learned that she had a half-sister from her mother who was approximately 2 years older than her. Mrs. Medina took her half-sister in as a foster child. Jazzel’s half-sister lived with her family for approximately 6 years until a number of conflicts emerged, in which she repeatedly broke the house rules and was ultimately asked to leave. Her half-sister was in
10th grade when she left. Jazzel no longer communicates with her half-sister, but believes that her older brother may have some contact with her. She does not express any desire to establish a relationship with her biological mother or her half-sister at the time of the interviews.

Mr. and Mrs. Medina had a total of six children. The three eldest were born in Mexico and the three youngest were born in the U.S., including Jazzel’s biological father. Mr. and Mrs. Medina immigrated to the U.S. separately in 1968 and 1972 respectively. They and have been living here ever since for more than forty years. Initially, they lived in a metropolitan area on the west coast, but moved to the desert community. It is in this desert community where Jazzel has lived her entire life until college. For clarification purposes when referring to Jazzel’s adoptive parents, I will either use “Mr. and Mrs. Medina” or refer to them as “Mom and Dad” because that is how Jazzel refers to them. Additionally, Mr. and Mrs. Medina’s biological children will be referred to as Jazzel’s aunts or uncles because she refers to them in this manner.

**Family educational history.** Jazzel is the first in her family to attend a university. Neither of her biological parents completed a high school education. Given that she has no contact with her biological mother, Jazzel was not able to elaborate on her biological mother’s education, other than that she knew that she did not complete high school. Regarding her biological father, Jazzel indicated that he also had not completed a high school education. Mr. and Mrs. Medina, her paternal grandparents, who are also her adoptive parents, attended school in Mexico. Mrs. Medina had a limited education, completing only first grade. Mr. Medina had a more extensive education, having
completed high school. He also stated that he began learning a trade, but did not complete the first year of the training. Both her older and younger brother dropped out of high school. She indicated that her older brother, who lived with her growing up, got into trouble at a young age and ended up being detained in juvenile hall. He has been in and out of juvenile hall and, more recently, prison. Her younger brother, who was adopted by her aunt, continues to live in his adoptive mother’s house, and his girlfriend recently moved in with him.

Jazzel reports that no one in her family believed she would go to college and that it was not expected of her to go because none of her family members had pursued higher education. In the event that she did go, they believed she would attend the local community college. Jazzel indicated that she became more serious about her education in high school and set higher goals for herself. As time went on, she began to discuss her college plans with her parents and family. She indicated that she was not sure if they really believed that she would move away. She believes that they may have given up by the time she was in high school because none of her parents’ biological children had pursued higher education. Her desire to pursue a degree beyond high school was a personal goal she had made for herself, but admits she also wanted to do it for her parents. She stated, “before it was something I wanted and then it was also something they wanted, and I did not want to disappoint them.” She indicated that her mother was more involved with her education. She would take her to school and wait for her until she ate breakfast; she would pack her lunch and do what she could. She would also go to awards nights and parent conferences. Jazzel would also communicate with her mother about things that
were going on in school, and regarding the colleges to which she wanted to apply. She describes her father as being more distant and not as involved in her education. She knows that he wanted her to go to college, but did not want to get disappointed if it did not happen. Furthermore, Jazzel reported that her father did not believe that she was really going to college and it really did not fully sink in until she was going back for her second year. Besides her parents, she has received educational support from a cousin and his wife. They have always showed interest in her education and remain in contact with her, now that she is in college. At times, they have helped her out financially or have bought things that she needed for school.

**Experience of support.** Jazzel indicated that, once her decision was made to go to college, her parents were supportive of her higher education dreams. They supported her in any way they could. Both Jazzel and her parents reported that the amount of financial support that they were able to provide their daughter was minimal, but when they had extra money they would give it to their daughter. Other ways that her parents helped her was in paying for her cell phone and buying her groceries to take to campus. Jazzel’s mother shared an anecdote in which her father bought her an Apple computer prior to her leaving to college for the first time. Mrs. Medina remembers it was something that made Jazzel very happy and it was somewhat unexpected. Given her parent’s financial situation, she did not think they would be able to afford it. Mrs. Medina reported that it was a financial sacrifice for their family, but they felt she deserved it for all her hard work in high school.
The support that her male cousin and his wife provided consisted of financial, material, and emotional support. In addition to giving Jazzel some money, they also bought her clothing and things for her apartment. Jazzel recalled having an important conversation with her cousin, during which he provided her with emotional support. This was when she talked to him about declaring her major in the social sciences and the discussion of future career goals that differed from those that her parents had previously talked to her about. Her cousin comforted her and told her that her parents would be proud of her and support her major choice and future career choice. Other family members, including aunts and uncles, provided Jazzel with groceries, bedding, and other things she needed when she moved to campus. Another form of support that Mrs. Medina talked about, that was provided to Jazzel by family members, included transportation to and from campus. Given that her father does not drive long distances, especially in the evening, due to some vision problems, she would rely on other family members for transportation.

Jazzel reported that the support she received from her parents was mostly emotional support. She understood that they supported her in any way they could and understood that they were limited in providing her with financial help. She talked about the encouragement she received from her parents, even when she had doubts. Although she maintained contact with her mother and father, she did not always go to them for support when she was having difficulties. She often avoided telling them her problems and indicated that she did not want to worry them with her issues.
Emergent themes.

*Feelings associated with the transition to college.* This theme describes the emotional process Jazzel and her family experienced as Jazzel transitioned from living at home to beginning a new life on campus. Jazzel and her family described saying goodbye
Figure 4. The Medina family.
and the experience of having second thoughts about leaving to college. Additionally, they addressed how they dealt with the emotional process of being separated, and how they maintained connection despite the distance.

Jazzel described how she experienced saying goodbye to her parents when it was time to leave her house and go to college. She mentioned feeling rushed at the end trying to get everything ready. She also reported that she felt that her father was calm and she described it in the following manner:

my dad stayed really calm . . . he was working on the front yard on the gate and he was not watching all these things (referring to the packing) and when we would eat and we would have dinner it wasn't like we talked about that (leaving to college) it was like we were trying to hold on to the few days of normal.

From Jazzel’s perspective, her father did not touch the subject of her moving away to college and Jazzel perceived this as his trying to maintain a sense of normalcy.

Additionally, Jazzel described her father as not wanting to show emotion in front of her, and disclosed that, when it was time to take her to campus, he decided not to go.

So my dad is really he tries to be all strong and show no emotions like my mom would tell me I heard your dad crying last night but like in front of me he would say comments like I’m so glad you are leaving. So he said he didn’t want to go, I have so much to do.

The lack of displays of emotions from her father was contrasted with her mother’s freer expression of emotions leading up to her departure. Jazzel reported that, a few months before she left, she would see her mother crying. Jazzel shared the following, “my mom would cry and I would say, oh mom you need to stop.” Jazzel indicated that her mother cried frequently, but as time got closer to her leaving, it happened less and less, and then she found herself feeling sad about leaving. “But I remember at the end
when I did not see her crying as much (referring to her mother) from like the months before, I was like I want all her attention, I want to stay here instead.” Although Jazzel’s mother was mourning her daughter’s departure months before it actually happened, Jazzel was excited about leaving and it was not until a few days before she left home that she became more emotional and sad.

Jazzel recalled feeling excited about beginning college, but did have some mixed feelings about leaving home. Other family members would ask her how she was feeling and she would say she was feeling fine. It was not until most of her things were packed that reality set in for her.

I remember people would be like how are you feeling and I would be like I don’t know, like any other day, and it just felt like always felt like normal until days before. Until all my things were packed like I only had clothes for like a few days out, that’s when I was like “oh God!”

Additionally, she reported becoming physically ill a couple of weeks before she left. Looking back, she believes she was in need of her mother’s attention.

When it came to a few weeks before, I was getting sick, like I think like it was in my head but I was physically getting sick, also, but I had no reason, I was like always wanting to be in bed and my mom taking care of me and I was wanting all this attention . . . which I really thought I was sick but now I think I really was not sick I just wanted her attention.

The reality of her leaving her home made her have second thoughts about going to college. At one point, she considered not going after all. “I remember a few days before I was like, Mom if you tell me you don’t want me to go I won’t go. I’ll go to the community college here.” Luckily, her mother did not encourage her to stay and reminded her of her dream to go to college, despite feeling sad that her daughter was leaving.
The actual goodbye was more emotional with her mother and cousin, who went to drop her off at campus, than with her father. She indicated that, because her father does not show emotion with her, she holds back her emotions with him, and described their goodbye in the following manner: “I did say ‘bye dad,’ because he doesn’t show emotion, so I don’t get too emotional. So I’m like oh yeah I gave him a hug and a kiss and okay I’m leaving now.” The goodbye with her mother was more emotional, but she was encouraged to hold it together by her cousin, who had given her a ride to campus.

So she (mother) and my cousin dropped me off and she was, of course, crying but um I remember when she hugged me and I was sad but it wasn’t till my cousin hugged me . . . and I started crying and he was like acting a little tough, so he was like no, no, no, stop this right now and then I was with my friend so I didn’t want to cry with my friend so I was like alright then well goodbye and I just stood there.

In addition to describing the emotional process of saying goodbye and the transition to college, Jazzel and her parents described how they remained connected when they were apart. Both Jazzel and her parents described communicating by phone and occasional visits. For the most part, it was more likely that Jazzel would visit her hometown than that her parents would come and visit her on campus. Jazzel’s father has some vision problems, which get worse at night, and, given the distance between campus and her hometown, her parents would have to rely on someone else for transportation.

Regarding the driving issue Jazzel’s father stated the following,

No porque no queramos ir pero porque yo no puedo manejar mucho yo no veo ya muy bien. y sobre todo como ahorita puedo manejar algo pero si se trata de manejar cuando se obscurece,yo no veo nada.

[Not because we don’t want to go but I can’t drive too much, I don’t see too well anymore and above anything else, right now I could drive some (referring to daytime), but if it is about driving when it gets dark, I don’t see well.]
Mrs. Medina communicates more often with Jazzel than her father. Her communication with her daughter is almost daily. In comparison, Mr. Medina reported that he communicates less often with her and keeps the conversation short and does not engage in small talk. He stated the following,

Si debes en cuanto. Yo no soy afecto de estar como estas? y como esto, hablo dos o tres palabras y nadamas, te quiero te amo y cuídate mucho, es todo pero. No soy de las personas que demuestran su afecto. Como estas mija y fijate que me paso esto en la manana y fui para alla y del afecto y del amor no le dicen nada, pero la platica dura 2, 3 horas y nada que tenga importancia. Yo nomas le digo la amo la quiero y estudia mucho es todo.

[Yes once in a while. I am not in the habit of saying ‘how are you’, and ‘how is this’. I speak two to three words and that is it, ‘I love you, and take care of yourself’; that is it. But I am not the type of person that shows their affection. Like ‘how are you’ and ‘guess what happened to me this morning; I went over there’, and about emotion, and love they don’t say anything but the conversation lasts two or three hours and it’s nothing important. I just tell her ‘I love you and study hard’; that is it.]

In regards to showing too much affection, Mr. Medina had a strong opinion and felt that it was a mistake to become too emotional; for example, when his daughter moved away to college, because he felt it demonstrated weakness and that you should be encouraging.

Being too emotional, he further elaborated, may make his daughter feel sad or depressed.

Es un error de parte de los padres sea cualesquiera que sea el padre o la madre demostrarle a los hijos un sentimiento erroneo . . . debe de apoyarle en todos los sentidos y eso es debilidad, en el aspecto de demostrarle que debe seguir adelante, un hijo se deprime, nunca debe ser eso.

[It is an error from parents whoever it may be, the father or the mother to demonstrate to their children an emotion that is wrong . . . we need to support them in all aspects and that (referring to emotions) is weakness, in the aspect that we must show them to move forward, a child will get depressed, we should never do that.]

For Jazzel’s mother, it was the opposite. She felt very comfortable displaying emotions and often became tearful and worried about her daughter moving away from
home. She stated that she was worried that something bad would happen to her. “Pero si era pendiente para uno de decir tan lejos y si algo me le pasa y mire gracias a Dios que esta bien.” [But yes it was a worry for us to think she is so far and if something happens to her but look, thank God that she is doing well.]

When her mother expressed concern, Jazzel reassured her mother that she should not worry about her. She explained to her mother that she was not into doing drugs or drinking, and she was not a person who got into conflicts with others. Despite her own sadness, she understood and supported her daughter’s choice to go to college. When Jazzel was having second thoughts about leaving, it was her mother who reminded her of her goals and told her that she had to go. “Si dijo creo que no estoy preparada para irme fuera de mi case lejos de mis papas. No, Mija tu dijiste y se fue.” [Yes she said I don’t think I’m prepared to leave my house away from my parents. No, daughter, you said, and so she left.]

The emotional experience of the departure from home and saying goodbye was a mixture of feelings, including excitement, sadness, worry, and even second thoughts. There was also a difference in the expression of emotions among Jazzel’s parents, where her father refrained from showing emotion and where her mother was more expressive. Similarly, Jazzel did not display affection in the same way towards her father as she did her mother. In the end, with the support of her parents, Jazzel left for college. They continued their communication through phone calls, home visits, and campus visits.

**Cultural values and higher education.** This theme describes the cultural values that Jazzel was raised with and how she navigated with them once she moved away from
home and began life on a college campus. Jazzel talked about some values that she embraced fully and others that she had difficulty understanding and accepting as her own. Furthermore, this theme also touches on the *consejos*, or advice, that her parents gave her when she left to college.

Some of the family values she observed in her family growing up include *machismo*, self-sacrifice, respect, as well as conservative values that included disapproval of homosexuality. Jazzel reported that she views her father as a *machista* and her mother as being self-sacrificing. In describing her father as a *machista*, she stated that “he is the man of the house” but feels that he did not act in the same way towards her as he did with her mother. Additionally, she states that she doesn’t believe he would tell her things like “your husband tells you what to do” or expect her to adopt this cultural value in her own life. As far as her mother sacrificing for her children, she recalls that her mother would not buy things for herself, so that she would have more to spend on her and her brother. From this, she learned that in a “supportive family sometimes you have to sacrifice for another person in your family.” Jazzel describes her parents as “old fashioned and conservative.” Consequently, she felt that they were strict with her growing up. She reports that there were things she was not allowed to do. A more conservative value that Jazzel did agree with and plans to adopt for herself is to not live with her significant other prior to marriage. Additionally, she also stated that her parents instilled in her a belief in God and to be a good person. Regarding faith, she stated the following:
Something my parents also showed me is like, I believe in God, but they always showed me like you don’t need to go to church every single week to be a believer and a follower of God like if you are a good person in your heart and you will like persignarte (to make the sign of the cross) and everyday and you say prayers everyday, you don’t have to go to church, God is with you and so I really believe that.

The value of familismo was also instilled in her growing up. She stated the following regarding the importance of family in her life: “They have always been family first, and you always love and care about the family.” It appears that this is a value she also has embraced.

Jazzel also talked about some values that she did not agree with, but that her parents believed and raised her with. At times, Jazzel would not contradict her parents because she was also taught to respect your elders. A particular family view that she did not adopt and struggled to deal with was her parents’ view on homosexuality/bisexuality. She describes herself as being more liberal and stated: “I believe everyone can be happy if they want to.” She also stated that she felt homosexuality was not chosen, but it was something that they felt and she did not understand why it was “wrong” in her parents’ eyes. She elaborated that she believed she would never convince her parents of this and, consequently, would not discuss the issue with them. She stated the following:

I don’t like to bring this controversial topic with my parents because there is no winning; they believe that they are right and they are the only ones right and that is final; no other thing could be right.

Another issue where her views clashed with her parents’ views had to do with who she could marry. According to Jazzel, her parents “believe I can either marry another Latino who’s not Salvadorian or a White person and that is it.” Regarding who she can marry, Jazzel reports that in the past,
I used to hear that, I would be like okay, but now that I feel like I’m more educated, I do not believe that, and I don’t feel that people or that races are under other races. I don’t believe that and I believe in equality and you know that your skin color does not mean anything, but they like really believe that so we do get into arguments.

On this latter issue, she worries about a future relationship because she wants her parents to accept whomever she chooses to date. She further elaborated that their views on whom she can go out with or marry has affected her because, if she finds herself being attracted to someone her parents would not approve of, it bothers her to know she cannot date them if she wants her parents approval.

In addition to the values that were instilled in her growing up, Jazzel’s family also gave her consejos when she left to college. Jazzel describes these consejos as having to do with safety and working through any difficulties she encountered. Her father gave her the following advice:

Que no declinara ante las adversidades de la vida, ante el estudio, tiene que superar todo eso cualesquier contratiempo que tenga en la vida lo tiene que superar y si ve que ya no lo puede superar que hable para que tenga comunicacion con nosotros con sus hermanos para que le digan de que manera solucionarlo. Eso es todo.

[That she wouldn’t decline against the adversities of life, or in her studies, that she has to overcome everything, whatever complication she has in life she must overcome it. And if she sees that she is unable to do so to call us, or her brothers/sisters (aunts/uncles) so that they can tell her how to solve it (the issue/problem) that is it.]

Her mom gave her similar advice regarding her academics, but focused more on her personal safety, respect, and self-care.

Que se cuide y que tiene que ser responsable y sigua como hasta ahora, eres persona que te levantas a estudiar y hacer lo que tienes que hacer y a darte a respetar. Y no hagas confianza cuando sales a caminar ve con cuidado, tu padre siempre te lo ha dicho. Es que es lo unico que uno le dice y le pide a Dios que la cuide.
Regarding taking care of herself, Jazzel’s mother would encourage her to keep a balance in her life, to have time to rest and eat well, so that she would have the necessary energy to study and do well. Her mother stated the following, “Pero también trata de cuando sea de descansar, come, descansa, para que también tengas ganas y alientos de estudiar. Porque si no duermes y no comes, no te va ayudar, tienes que cuidarte” [But also try when it’s time to rest, take time to eat, to rest so that you also have a desire and are encouraged to study. Because if you don’t sleep and you don’t eat, it is not going to help you, you need to take care of yourself.] Jazzel felt that some of the advice she received was related to her gender.

Jazzel expressed that the experience of receiving consejos, particularly the ones that had to do with taking care of herself and to stand up for herself, had to do with her gender. In other words, she believed she received these consejos because she was a female going away from home and living on her own. She stated that she has adopted these safety consejos and is extremely careful, particularly when walking into parking lots or opening the door to her apartment.

I feel like I'm really safe . . . I’m pretty much ready for war, like my keys I have pepper spray, a flashlight, a whistle, and a little compass . . . and I always have that whenever like my friend and I we walk to the parking structure . . . and . . .
have pepper spray unlocked ready to like attack someone . . . I’m really aware and I think they always told me just be aware of your surroundings, be safe always be ready to attack if you need to and I feel like I’m definitely like that. . . . In my apartment if someone rings the doorbell I’m not just opening, I’m looking through the peephole making sure I know that person, If I can’t see their face I’m not going to open it.

Jazzel grew up in a home where many values were instilled in her. As she moved away from home and developed a stronger sense of self and autonomy from her family, she has been able to decide which values she chooses to embrace. There are only a few that she has decided not to embrace, and these were mostly regarding her parents’ views on homosexuality, and who is acceptable to marry based on their race/ethnicity. As far as the consejos she received from her family, she has put them into practice, now that she is living away from home.

*Types of support given and received.* This theme describes the types of support that Jazzel’s parents offered her when she left home to attend college, as well as Jazzel’s report of the type of support she felt she received from her family once she was in college. Her father described three types of support (material, psychological, and economic support), that he described were provided to Jazzel by her parents and extended family. Some of the support Jazzel received from extended family members included rides to and from campus, as well as providing her with things she needed for school. Jazzel described the type of support she received from her family as emotional support. However, she also acknowledged some of the financial/material help she has received from them.

The type of support that Jazzel’s parents provided for her was described by her father in the following manner: “*De mi parte, economicamente, psicológicamente, y materialmente en todo lo que se pudo.*” [On my behalf, financially, psychologically, and
materially in all that we could. Although her parents talked about providing her with some financial support, they admitted that the financial support they provided was minimal, given their economic situation. In fact, her father lamented not being able to help her more financially. He stated the following:

Ayudarle economicamente eso es lo que tenemos que lamentar nosotros, que fue lo que no tuvimos. Pero, por que amor ha tenido de mas aqui. Comprension, amor y todo eso. Cuestion de comida vestuario, pobremente aqui ha tenido. . . . No es lo mismo tener un millon de dolares y decir aqui estan cien, docientos , trescientos dolares cada semana o cada quince dias a decirle toma a qui estan 50 dolares o 5 dolares es muy diferente hay mucha diferencia.

[To help her financially is something we lament, that was what we didn’t have. But love she has had more than enough here. Understanding, love, and all of that. In regards to food and clothing, she has humbly had it here. It is not the same to have a million dollars and to say here is one hundred, two hundred, three hundred dollars weekly or every other week to say here is fifty dollars or five dollars. It is very different, there is a huge difference.]

Both of Jazzel’s parents indicated that the financial help they were able to provide their daughter was minimal and inconsistent. When they would see her, they would give her any extra money they had. Her mother also contributed to helping Jazzel with some expenses, including paying for her cell phone and buying her groceries to take back with her. Her mother indicated that Jazzel also worked on campus to help pay for her expenses. Her extended family, including some aunts and an older cousin, have also provided her with groceries, clothing, and small appliances that she needed when she moved away. The support from her family continued past her initial move to campus. As recent as this past semester, when she was in the process of preparing to study abroad, Jazzel reached out to her family to discuss her plans. Her mother recalled a recent conversation she had with Jazzel, in which Jazzel disclosed the following:
Les dije que me voy a ir fueras de aqui a estudiar y le mando a el decir dime que y que necesitas para comprartelo para que te larges eh, para que te vallas. Que les dijo, dice ahorita atodavia no se por que ahí es muy frío creo y no se si decirles que me compren ropa calientita o algo pero si yo se que ellos me van a comprar cosas. Así es de que digo pues eso tambien cuenta mucho por que ella tiene confianza mas con el, que con los demas.

[I told them that I was going away from here to study and he (her cousin) said, tell me what you need, so I can buy it for you, so that you can go, so that you can leave. What did you tell him? She said, I am not sure yet (what I’ll need), Because, over there, it will be cold, I think and I don’t know if I should ask them to get me warmer clothing. So I say that also counts a lot because she trusts him (her cousin) more than anyone else.]

From this conversation that Jazzel had with her mother, we are able to observe that Jazzel has a close relationship with one of her male cousins and that he is willing to help her financially when she is in need. Mrs. Medina also noted that one of Jazzel’s aunts volunteered to buy her all her bedding, including sheets, pillows, and comforters. Additionally, Mrs. Medina reported that the support Jazzel received from family existed prior to her moving away to college. Some of her family members paid for her senior portraits and others paid for the dinner to celebrate her high school graduation.

The material and psychological support that Mr. Medina described consisted of providing Jazzel with goods that she needed when she left to college. For example, prior to her leaving, her father was able to buy her a laptop that she needed for school. Other materials that were provided by her parents and family included small appliances for her dorm as well as clothing and groceries. The psychological support she received was described by Mr. Medina in the following way:

Al pensar de ella que se superara en sus estudios que no fuera a decaer, todo eso, que no fuera a decir un día papa siempre no voy a seguir, no tiene que terminar tiene que continuar con sus estudios hasta terminar la carrera.

[In the way she thinks, that she needs to succeed in her studies, not to let herself decline, that is it. That she wouldn’t say one day, Dad I am not going to
continue (in college), no that she has to finish, she must continue with her studies until she is done with her career/degree.]

Mr. Medina describes psychological support as encouragement to keep moving forward with her studies and telling her to never give up until she is done. Furthermore, both Mr. and Mrs. Medina expressed that they wanted Jazzel to feel that she could count on them for anything. “En explicarle que hiba ser un cambio drastico para ella el estar fueras, y todo lo que hablamos fue en cuestion de apoyo, de explicarle que contaba con nuestro apoyo en todos los sentidos.” [In explaining to her that it would be a drastic change for her to be away, and all we talked about was regarding support, in explaining that she could count on our support in every sense of the word.] Jazzel’s parents expressed that they felt the support they provided to their daughter has continued past her first year in college. Furthermore, her parents described the support not only coming from them, but from extended family, as well. As described earlier, different family members have pitched in at one time or the other with goods, offering rides, and even financial support.

Jazzel also talked about the support she received from her family when she went away to college. Jazzel expressed feeling that her family believes in her, trusts her and she knows that they are very proud of her because she is the first in her family attending college. She described their support in the following manner:

Just being there for me and um you know financially, financial support is not that big but the emotional support is always there cause that it what they can always offer to me so they always like always just like telling me oh we miss you, like we are here for you if you need to talk to us, like so it is a lot of emotional support just knowing that I could talk to them.
Jazzel also described feeling support from her family when they expressed to her how proud they were of her accomplishments and how much they believe she will accomplish her goals, especially after continuing with college past her first year.

Yeah all the time they always tell me how proud they were, they are always saying we are so proud of you, like um, I’m studying abroad and they’re just like every time you set your mind to do something you do it. You don’t just say you are going to do it like you really do it. They always say I’m so proud of you, I wish you the best, like just positive things.

The support that Jazzel experienced from her extended family came from older family members who praised her for being on her own at such a young age.

I feel like the older people, like realize like how great it is to be independent and be so young in comparison to like my cousins, so they are like ‘good for you,’ like ‘you don’t want to be living that life,’ but since my cousins are used to that, they kinda don’t see it as a difference, so yeah I feel like it’s the older people who are like ‘we are really proud of you.’

Jazzel also talked about two important instances where the support from her parents was crucial to her. The first was when she was having some doubts about leaving home and the second was when she was on campus attending a summer program, prior to beginning the fall quarter. During the summer program and her first experience away from home, she became homesick and was thinking of leaving. At times she wondered what would have happened had she not had the encouragement and support of her parents that reminded her of her goals. She stated the following:

Overall if they would not have supported me then I don’t know if I would have gone home . . . so I feel like it did help me be more positive and just know, like you know what? I’m not going back home, this is my life so I better start enjoying it, you know.

Furthermore, she described their intervention as valuable to her. She stated the following:
It was like I said valuable, just it was important, like I felt it was a critical time in my weakness when I wanted to go home and it was important for me to hear them say . . . like the reassurance like you are making the right decision by being there like this is the new step like to your life so just that reassurance was what was good.

Similar to her parents, Jazzel also felt that her parents’ support has continued past her first year in college. The only difference she noted was the following:

I feel like now they’ve seen like I’m going to do it with or without their support anyway, so they kind of like okay I don’t need to like reassure her so much like she is doing fine. So I guess it’s kind of changed in that way, but they are still positive support no matter what.

Jazzel described that early on, when she had expressed interest in attending college, her parents were glad about her decision, but were unsure if she would really go. Now that she is close to completing her second year, she feels her parents support more than ever.

So I feel like now that I have proven myself, if you will, like when I say I’m going to do something like they hold it like a high value and they are like yeah, like that’s going to happen which makes me feel good cause I feel like I’m more supported now.

In addition to the support that is provided by her family, Jazzel noted that she has a good support system on campus. She stated the following:

I think it’s just the support system I get here. I work in the student support services office. Not only do I work there but I have easy access to professionals, staff that can guide me if I have any questions on things, so I feel like that is really, really, great.

As it relates to her academics, going to college, and successfully completing her degree, Jazzel believed her family is very supportive of this goal and believes in her. However, there is an area where she feels conflicted about family support, and that is in her personal relationships. Jazzel discussed that her parents would prefer her to date someone of her same ethnicity or someone who is Caucasian. She does not feel her
parents would support her if she were romantically involved with someone of any other race. Jazzel described family support in the following manner: “In my mind, family support means you support one another no matter what; even if you don’t like it, you still are with your family.”

Being there for each other, wishing good things upon each other, um, trying to if any opportunities come up, telling each other about them, um, hearing what the person has to say, encouraging them, and just trying to do things for their best interest and not for yours.

Her experience of family support is not exactly how she believes it should be as it relates to potential romantic relationships.

I feel like what support means in my family is, like, I will support you in anything that I believe is greater for you, but if you are going to do something else, I’m not going to support you. . . . I try to understand them and their point of view, but it does, I feel like that is not supportive, what if I want to do that, then you’re not going to support me.

It appears, then, that Jazzel is concerned about not having the support of her parents in the event that she would date someone they do not approve.

The support given by and received from the Medina family came in various forms. Although limited in financial resources, Mr. and Mrs. Medina provided her with money from time to time, but the extended family also participated in providing goods to Jazzel when she needed them. Jazzel herself agreed that the financial support she received from her parents was not much, but the emotional support they provided was important and crucial for her in times when she was having doubts about going to college.

**Strategies for positive college experience and adjustment.** Within this theme, Jazzel’s parents described the qualities that Jazzel has and that, in their opinion, have made her a good student in college, and that have helped her adjust to college life. These
include being a hard worker, being self-motivated, and how dedicated she is to her studies. Jazzel also talked about her own strengths, participating in a campus organization, as well as things that were instilled in her by her family that she felt have helped her navigate her college experience thus far. Additionally, she discussed her journey in adjusting to college life. Her personal qualities as well as her family’s advice and encouragement have helped her have a positive college experience so far.

Jazzel’s mother described her as self-motivated. She recalled that, as a younger student at home, they never worried about Jazzel turning in her assignments on time or doing poorly in school. In fact, she noted that she was a very dedicated student and remembered some nights that her daughter would stay up late studying and completing assignments. Her mother stated that she always tells Jazzel the following, “siempre le digo mija eres tan luchona tan trabajadora” [I always tell her, daughter you are such a fighter, so hard working]. Other qualities that her mother sees in her are strength and intelligence, and these are qualities that her mother believes will get her to complete her degree. Regarding these qualities, Mrs. Medina stated the following:

*Es muy fuerte, ella, es muy este inteligente y siempre dice Mom los extrano, hija también nosotros te extranamos pero sabemos que es por tu bien para que salgas adelante y tengas manana lo que nosotros no tuvimos y no te podemos dar. La gente que estudia va a tener mas y va a salir de un ambiente pobre porque no es lo mismo mija que vallas a trabajar en un Mc Donalds que vas a ganar poquito a que seas alguien profesional.*

[She is very strong, and is very intelligent and she always says Mom I miss you, we also miss you, but we know that it is good for you, so that you can move forward and that tomorrow you have what we were never able to have or give you. People who study will have more and will be able to get out of poverty. It is not the same to go work for McDonalds, where you will earn a little, to become a professional.]
Her parents expressed that they feel she has adjusted well on campus, and that this process was not difficult for Jazzel. Mrs. Medina stated “ella me dice que está contenta” [She tells me that she is happy]. Similarly, her father stated that “está feliz y contenta siempre. En ningún momento ha demostrado apatía para los estudios . . . ella se siente a gusto alla.” [She is always very happy. She has never demonstrated apathy in her studies . . . she feels comfortable over there.]

Jazzel’s experience of adjusting to college life is different from the one her parents present. In part, this is due to the lack of communication with her parents when she was experiencing difficulties her first year. Jazzel reported that she wanted to deal with things on her own and did not want to worry her parents. She stated, “I never call them with all my worries, like, that does not happen.” Furthermore, she described how she felt during her first academic year.

I know the first year I felt really out of place. I never told anybody how I felt, but I know at first I wanted to transfer, but I don’t know where to. I just wanted to leave this school because I felt like I don’t belong here; everybody is so different, like I’m the other here. Like, that’s how I felt.

Although initially she did experience difficulties adjusting to college life, it was finding her group of friends through a campus organization that ultimately made her feel more comfortable and helped her adjust.

I think it was just having, finding a Latino group that I felt like I could connect with I feel like having that allowed me to start kind of who I am. Because I’m like not the same person that I was in high school . . . I started being more professional and so now I see myself more as a professional also, um, so I feel like they, that was the support system that helped me the most to adjust.

At the time of her interview, Jazzel expressed feeling that she had adjusted to campus. She stated the following:
I know that I have successfully adjusted just because I feel comfortable and confident in every aspect of my life, like with my family, with my friends, you know, at my work, as a student. I feel like I have adjusted to everything. In every aspect of my life, I feel like I’m comfortable and confident; that’s how I know I feel like I have adjusted here.

One of the things that Jazzel described that she had to adjust to was her grades. In high school, she always earned a grade of A, but she found out that this is not always possible in college, and learned to accept that sometimes she will get a B. She explained that her mother has helped her get a better perspective on this.

But my mom understands, I feel that she is more understanding and I work and I do research, so she understands that I’m busy, so I feel like she helped me in a way. Like, I remember when I got a B in a test and I was really sad and I told her, ‘oh I got a B’ and she’s like ‘it’s okay’. Just made me realize, ‘you’re busy and you have a lot of responsibilities and it’s totally okay if you got a B’. You know, try your hardest to get an A, but if you can’t, like don’t beat yourself up for it.

Another important step for Jazzel in her adjustment process was declaring a major. She indicated that her father encouraged her to go into the medical field, but she was accepted to college as undecided/undeclared. She ultimately declared a major in the social sciences and not in the hard sciences, as her father would have wanted. She discussed this with an older cousin who has always been supportive of her college goals.

I feel like that was really, it was a big deal for me because that is why I am in college, because of my major. So just knowing that they are still, that being in college, that it doesn’t even matter what I’m doing here makes them happy, so I feel like that was a really big part of adjusting.

Jazzel also reflected on some advice she received from her father that she believed has helped her during her college experience.

My dad always encouraging me as a Latina female coming to college and just being very confident, I feel like he knew that if I came in being like shy and not being assertive he knew that I, that people would detect that obviously on me. So I feel they tried to prepare me for that, like, ‘you’re Latina, but that’s okay.
because that means that you worked harder than other people to get where you are at and you’re a woman, but that is also okay because, as long as you are confident in yourself, like, it won’t matter. People will respect you and see you as their equal,’ so I feel like they prepared me in that way.

He’s always like ‘you be strong, respectful woman and you make sure people respect you and you carry yourself, you know, strong, and don’t be afraid to voice your opinion, like, other people don’t need to like you, you say what you need to say and just, like, you are going to go far, you’re strong.’ So it’s just I feel like he empowers me in that way as a woman.

She further elaborated that feeling empowered has helped her network with others on campus and feeling confident enables her to talk to anyone and do her best in school.

Jazzel also noted that others notice her confidence and her assertiveness.

People have complimented me on that, like ‘wow you always like being so tough, not like tough in fighting people, but tough emotionally, and you’re always being assertive and saying what you want and what you don’t want.’ I feel like it has been good for me all those things that he said to me.

Jazzel decided not to worry her parents with all the difficulties she was experiencing during her first year in college and wanted to do things on her own. However, her family did have some involvement in her adjustment process. Her father’s encouragement to be strong and assertive and outspoken helped her be a successful student. Her mother helped her get a better perspective on her grades. Her cousin reassured her that any major she chose would be accepted by her family because they want her to be successful in anything that she does. Ultimately, joining the Latino campus organization made her feel welcomed and a part of the university. Her personal characteristics, her family’s encouragement and words of wisdom, together with her participation in the Latino campus organization, helped her to have a successful transition and adjustment to college life.
Finding my place in college, Soy Latina. This theme describes Jazzel’s experiences on her college campus and the process she went through to become comfortable and find her place. Additionally, this theme also addresses Jazzel’s growth in becoming more culturally aware and able to own her ethnic identity.

Jazzel reported that she felt she adjusted to campus life, but it took her several trials before she got to a place where she felt that she belonged. She recalled feeling out of place at first, and was seeking to find a group of people that allowed her to feel more comfortable. During this journey, she relied upon herself to seek out people and organizations on campus that would facilitate a sense of belonging to campus, so that she would not feel like an outsider. During this initial period, where she described feeling that she did not belong, she never reached out to her family to discuss what she was going through. However, she did report that she ultimately felt more comfortable and closer to friends that were of her same ethnicity because she felt that they could better relate to her and understand her. She explains this in the following statement:

The people that I consider I’m really close to because they understand me, and I feel like other ethnicities, even though we are friends, we are not really, really close friends because we don’t come from the same background, so we don’t understand each other in some ways.

Jazzel discussed feeling out of place at the university, in part because people around her were of a different cultural background and also because she felt others believed that they had a better education than she had. She reported the following: “I feel like, at first I felt out of place because there is a lot of White and Asians here and I felt, like, out of place.” Regarding how she felt others perceived her, she states the following: “I felt like, in a way, like, they had, they perceived that their education was better than
mine and maybe it was.” It appears that Jazzel felt that others perceived that her education thus far had been inferior and even she believed it was possible that her education was not as good, compared to her college peers. Jazzel discussed that the feeling that she did not fit in on campus made her question whether she belonged at that particular university. She made the following remarks concerning this period in her transition to college:

Since I was the one not fitting in, I felt like I was the other, so I was like maybe I shouldn’t have chosen this school; like maybe I should have chose (another campus) where, like, more Latinos would be there or I don’t know what I thought, like, that is how I felt, though, and I felt, like, out of place.

Eventually, these feelings began to change when she made more friends and joined a Latina/o campus organization that helped her to feel comfortable. Jazzel pushed forward despite feeling insecure about how others perceived her, and indicated that she believed that what mattered most was how hard she worked, now that she was in college.

Jazzel talked about the biggest challenge she experienced once she was living on campus. She stated: “I think the greatest challenge was, like, finding my niche in who I was.” Furthermore, she elaborated that, in doing so, she did not want to “discriminate against other races either.” Consequently, she sought out campus organizations. One was a Latino organization and the other was one that focused on community service. She indicated that she felt very comfortable with the Latino business organization and soon realized that the other campus organization she joined had a very different vision of what she felt community service was. In the end, it was the Latino business organization where she began to feel that she belonged, despite the fact that she was not a business major. It appears that, once she found her place, she was able to begin not only fitting in on
campus, but also embracing her Latino culture. “Finding a Latino group that I felt like I could connect with, I feel like having that allowed me to start kind of who I am.”

Through the process of embracing her ethnicity, she described that being Latina and a minority on a college campus signified that she was strong and had the ability to move forward and do well in school. She stated the following:

I feel like being a Latina and a minority, um, I feel like those things, coming from that background, has showed how, like, um, committed I am and how much I am willing to work hard . . . now I realize that they, I feel that when people see me, they just know I work a little bit more harder and I’m, like, how do you say, like, I’m committed to what I’m doing.

It appears that Jazzel was able to appreciate how far she had come, while, at the same time, identifying with her Latina identity.

Jazzel reported that her parents and family were not too involved in helping her in the adjustment process. This may be a result of her not sharing some of the struggles she was facing initially. However, she did indicate that she felt that her parents helped her maintain a balance of who she is, because, on the one hand, they encouraged her to be successful and to do what she had to do in order to accomplish her goals, but they also reminded her to speak Spanish and cook Mexican food. In a way, her parents were reminding her to not let go of her culture. Jazzel also reported that she embraced her ethnic identity once she was living on campus. She stated the following: “It’s so weird because, here in college, I feel so proud to be Latina, so here I don’t identify as an American; I’m like I’m Latina.” When she was home, she identified more as American.

It’s kinda like opposite, because I feel like, when people are at home, they embrace their culture there, and, then, when they are in school, they might be like their surroundings, but I feel like, here I’m, I identify as Latina (on campus) and at home I’m like, ‘Mom. I'm American. Stop.’ So I think my mom might think
that at school I don’t speak Spanish or something, but I’m kinda like opposite roles.

It appears that, because she is different from many members of her family who have not moved away from home at a young age to pursue college, she stands out, and others, as well as herself, perceive her to be more American. Furthermore, it is difficult for her to understand why individuals in her family who are young adults stay at home, even when they are living with their significant other and have started their own families. In other words, there are multiple generations living under one roof and, according to her, that is normal and acceptable among her family members.

Jazzel’s journey of finding her place on campus led her to embrace her cultural identity as a Latina and find her comfort group on campus. Furthermore, it caused her to feel proud of her ethnic identity and was a source of acknowledgement that she had a lot to offer. She stated the following:

Being here, like, I feel like, in college, when you come from a different background, it’s great because you have so much more to, you know, and so I think that’s why I’m so proud, like, why I’m here, like, I’m Latina, like, I come from a different culture, but, like, just shows my diversity as a person, so I think that’s why I’ve just been opposite in, like, embracing my culture and who I am.

**Challenges in the college experience.** This theme is about Jazzel navigating her college experience with her family. Because she is the first in her family to attend a university, there were some misconceptions by members of her family regarding what that experience was like for her. Jazzel was bothered by the misconceptions they had concerning college life. Additionally, Jazzel had a difficult time opening up with her family to discuss some of the difficulties she was experiencing in college. She believed that her parents thought she was doing well, living in a beautiful place, and taking
advantage of a great opportunity. Jazzel did not want her parents to worry about her and the struggles she experienced. Additionally, because they had never been to college, she felt they would not understand her college struggles. This theme, then, covers not only misconceptions by some of Jazzel’s family members about what college life is, but also Jazzel’s difficulty in addressing her struggles with her parents in order to avoid worrying them, as well as her belief that they may not be able to understand what she was going through because they had never attended college.

Jazzel talked about some misconceptions about college life that she experienced from some of her cousins:

I feel like my cousins who are younger have this, like, really they clearly watch movies too much, because they think like I’m just having fun. I’m going out to parties da da da da da. And so like when I tell them I’m so tired, they are ‘of what?’ and I’m just like, ‘excuse me’. And so like my younger cousins, not younger than me, older than me, but young, they don’t kinda validate what I do.

From this excerpt, it is clear that some of her cousins do not understand the time commitment and responsibility that attending college entails. It appears that their perception of college is influenced by the social aspect of college life that is often portrayed in films or on television. Furthermore, it appears that Jazzel was bothered by some family members questioning why she was tired. She indicated that, at first, she wanted to talk to them and explain what college was all about, but later gave up on the idea, thinking they would never really understand.

At first I did. I would be like, no let me explain to you what I do, but, like, now I’m just like I do not have the effort to be doing all of that. I’m not going to waste my breath.”
Jazzel made a point in differentiating younger and older family members, stating that older family members, despite not attending college, had a better sense of the time commitment and work she had to put into college.

Another area in which Jazzel felt she was not understood had to do with her moving to campus. Some of her family members still considered her parent’s home as her home and would always ask her when she was coming home. Jazzel tried to explain that her parent’s home was not her home anymore; that she had left and would not be moving back.

I’m like, ‘why, the point of moving out is to live in your own place. Why would I be at my Mom's house all of the time’. So I feel like my family was in, like, that belief . . . I’m like, it’s the same thing. I moved out, I’m not going back.

Furthermore, she indicated being surprised by their reaction, because she believed they had the same understanding concerning her moving out. Once she had left, she realized that her parents and some of her family members had a different understanding of what that meant. Jazzel describes this in the following excerpt:

I thought we were on the same page, like we all knew what the transition was. But I was like, what? So I just made it very clear I have moved out and this is my apartment in (name of city). This is my house, like, this is where I live. And this is my Mom’s house where I visit sometimes.

It appears that, for Jazzel, moving out for college meant moving out permanently. She was going to college to begin a new life and she was not planning to move back home after she was done. Other individuals in her family saw her move as a temporary situation, where she would visit often and would move back home when she completed college.
Jazzel also appears to have kept some things from her parents, mainly for two reasons: first, to avoid worrying them, and second, for fear that they would not understand what she was going through in college. For example, when she is going through a difficult day, she does not reach out to her parents.

No, when I have really hard days or I'm worried about something I don't, just, like, because I don't want to worry them and I don't want to bring them my drama that I have.

I don’t feel like they have really been a part because I don't feel, like I said, I didn't tell them about, like, me finding myself in a weird place.

Jazzel talked about her mother worrying a lot about her. She went out of her way not to let them know when she encountered some difficulties or when she was feeling sad. Even when she was sick, she did not want her mother to know, because she would worry too much. She wanted to show her parents and family that she was doing well and that everything was okay on campus. Jazzel stated the following about talking to her parents about not fitting in: “I just didn’t want to, because I know in their imagination, like, my life is great here, everything is perfect, and I didn’t want them to think, like, I didn’t fit in.” Additionally, she talked about resolving things on her own or through campus services, whenever possible.

An additional area that she felt that her parents do not understand concerned her major and future career. Jazzel talked about her father wanting her to become a doctor. She stated that, in his eyes, being a doctor or lawyer equates to success. She stated the following: “He always says things like doctors and lawyers are the people that are successful, rich, and so sometimes that still kind of messes with my mind.” Jazzel has
other plans for her career and wants to pursue a graduate degree to become a counselor in higher education. She stated the following:

I don’t feel the courage to say ’no I’m not doing that (going to medical school)’, so sometimes it is stressful, like wanting to make them happy. So they are both a support and they are an encouragement, but sometimes when their expectations are, what they want are not the same as what I want, it becomes stressful for me, so I’m just like ’oh God!’; that burden is in my head.

Although Jazzel has hinted to her parents about her interest in counseling, she has not found the courage to tell them that she is not going to pursue medical school. It appears that she does not want to let them down by telling them how she feels. However, it is clear to her that medical school or a career in law is not something she wishes to pursue. In the meantime, she has avoided full disclosure to her parents, as it was still a stressful area to discuss with them.

Overall, then, different aspects of Jazzel’s college experience were misunderstood by some family members in, including how busy and stressful college life can be, moving out and not being able to visit home as much, as well as majors and career choices. Some of these misunderstandings appear to have become more complicated by her choosing to not communicate how she was feeling or by not elaborating about her experiences.

**Results of Cross-Case Analysis**

This section of the chapter will address both similarities and differences among the four cases presented in this chapter. A total of 12 interviews were conducted with four college students and their respective parents. The themes that were similar among all or most cases will be addressed first. A total of six themes were found to be similar across
### Table 2

**Summary of Cross Case Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Across Cases</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Sample Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Values and Consejos in Higher Education</td>
<td>1. The Fernandez</td>
<td>The reason why I come to higher education is to help, the main thing I think to motivate me in higher education is to help out my family I guess, like I think I’m doing this so that I can for my family, not only to make them proud but like also be of service when someone needs help either financially or anything like that (Juan Fernandez).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Types of Support Received in Higher Education</td>
<td>5. The Fernandez</td>
<td>That she take care of herself, that she has to be responsible and to keep doing things like she has till now, you are the type of person that gets up to study and do what you have to do. And respect yourself and make others respect you. And don’t be too trusting when you go out walking, be careful, your dad has always told you this. That’s it, and to ask God to take care of her (Mrs. Medina).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding My Place in College, Soy Latina/o</td>
<td>9. The Heredia</td>
<td>I felt happy cause it showed to me that they cared and they loved me and they were willing to make the hour drive to support me even if it was just laundry detergent. Um it really shows me that they would do anything for me to help me out. (Jack Nieto).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. The Nieto</td>
<td>Just knowing that you have someone, you know there is someone there for you even though like I said a right decision, wrong decision, a problem or a good outcome. There is somebody there and yeah for me its still like if it’s something they wouldn’t like its still like the lecture of why they don’t like it or why it was bad but at the end they’d be there (Isabel Heredia).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. The Medina</td>
<td>I’d say it’s been good cause I’m still here so um, yeah, everything is good. This college is different from my hometown in a lot of ways I feel like I can be myself here and I don’t feel like I have to drastically change myself in any form of way. So I feel like I can be me and I can express myself in any way I want here (Jack Nieto). “I feel like being a Latina and a minority um I feel like those things, coming from that background, has showed how like, um committed I am and how much I am willing to work hard…now I realize that they, I feel that when people see me they just know I work a little bit more harder and I’m, like how do you say, like, I’m committed to what I’m doing (Jezzel Medina).</td>
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Table 2 continues
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<tr>
<th>Theme Across Cases</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Sample Quotes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Journey of the Transition to College</td>
<td>12. The Fernandez</td>
<td>I want to say an anxious like, I wanted to be part of the university so I mean I wasn’t really nervous about going to a university, …I don’t think I felt anything the weeks leading up, I didn’t really feel anything until I was already on campus, that was when everything hit me (laughs) like a ton of bricks. Cause then that’s when I felt like I’m going to be on my own this is where I mature as an adult (Jack Nieto) So it was exciting but at the same time really stressing like oh I have to get all this and so little time and you know, and you think like you have all this time, oh I have all summer and I don’t go until late September, but yeah, at the end it was really stressing like just trying to get everything all in a month I guess (Isabel Heredia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Adjustment Strategies</td>
<td>16. The Fernandez</td>
<td>It was hard but good at the same time. Like it was hard moving away from home because I was used to it. Also like I was really attached to my baby brother so it was kind of like I missed him knocking things over making me laugh at silly baby things they do. And then in general it was different, and then it was hard coursewise because even though I took AP classes in high school it was a lot different. I know they are supposed to prepare you, and this and that. I still thought like college courses are still like very difficult besides the fact that I was in AP courses. So the transition was hard at first and then I mean you get use to it (Isabel Heredia). I think the moment I know I’m fully adjusted is when I am able to organize my time where I am able to put time into studying as well as to go out and have fun as well. Like balance between my life (Juan Fernandez).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges Encountered in College</td>
<td>19. Heredia Family</td>
<td>I would be like its not even that far three and a half or four hours depending on traffic you know, its not too far and you don’t have car so you have to depend on other people and the bus takes like ten hours cause I have done it (Isabel Heredia). One day he was upset and confronted us, asking why we hadn’t fixed the problem. (Mr. Nieto)</td>
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all or most of the cases. In the initial analysis only five themes emerged across the cases. During the writing process as the description of themes was taking place it became apparent that one of the unique themes could be collapsed with two other themes making it a major theme across cases. The theme challenges encountered in college was born, bringing the total number of themes across cases to 6. These include the following: (a) cultural values and _consejos_ in higher education, (b) types of support received in higher education, (c) finding my place in college, (d) the emotional journey of transition to college, (e) college adjustment strategies, and (f) challenges encountered in college.

Second, any differences that stood out among the cases will be addressed. These include the following two themes: (a) parental involvement in the college experience, and (b) lessons learned in college. These latter themes were unique and did not fit in with the six themes discussed earlier. Unlike the within case analysis that explored each of the themes in more depth and description, this section will highlight the similarities and the unique differences among the cases; consequently, it will be much shorter.

**Cultural values and _consejos_ in higher education.** One common theme among all four participants was their discussion of cultural values that were instilled in them and how they navigated these values once they moved out of their homes to attend college. Additionally, they discussed _consejos_ (advice) they were given by their parents and family members when they were leaving home to attend college. Among all four participants, the importance of family and/or family unity was discussed. Similarly, they all talked about gender differences as it relates to education and social gender rules in
their family. Most parents encouraged their respective son or daughter to work hard, be safe, and make good choices and work through any problems they encountered.

Juan, Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel all discussed the importance of family in their lives. Both Juan and Jazzel indicated that their family instilled in them that family comes first. Juan stated the following, “always giving back to your family like no matter how far you make it, family is first.” Similarly, Jazzel indicated learning this from her parents: “family first” and that you always love and care about your family. For Juan, family was one of the motivators to pursue higher education. He wanted to have better employment opportunities after graduating to be able to help his parents. Jack was also motivated by his family to attend college. He explained that he and his parents wanted him to be a role model for his younger sisters. Being the first to go to college would set a precedent for his sisters to follow. Isabel and her parents discussed the importance of family and family unity. In the end, this was one of the factors that swayed her to attend college closer to home. Initially, she had thought of attending school out of state, but ultimately decided to attend a university that was a few hours away from her parents’ home. Her parents did not want her to move out of state for college and preferred that she stay closer to home.

Juan, Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel all talked about the role that gender had in their education and socially, specifically focusing on how gender values played out in their respective families. All participants had siblings of the opposite sex and consequently were able to elaborate on any differences that they observed. As it relates to education and pursuing a college degree, all participants indicated that their parents would support any one of their children in pursuing a college degree. Both males and females were
encouraged to go to college. For example, Juan stated, “they also encouraged my sister to go to college as well.” Similarly, Jack stated, “my sister got the same kind of messages, to study hard to go for it, um, do whatever you have to do to succeed.”

It appears that, when there were gender differences observed in the family, they were related to going out and socializing. This was true for Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel, who observed and experienced gender differences at home. For example, Isabel indicated that she was encouraged to learn to cook because, as a female, it was a necessary skill to have. Isabel indicated that she did not mind learning how to cook and that it was great to be able to make her own home-cooked meals when she was in college. An area that appeared to bother Isabel had to do with going out. Isabel felt that her parents were very strict and did not let her go out too often. She reported that, at times, they would not even let her go out with her male cousins because she was the only female. Regarding gender differences, Isabel stated the following:

Oh like girls stay at home and things like that I mean that aspect yeah I would get mad and I would be like no we are allowed to do anything just like a guy is it doesn’t matter. The whole thing like growing up like a girl needs to know how to cook and I like the whole kitchen thing so that was not a problem learning how to cook.

Similar to Isabel’s experience, Jack also noted that, in his family, he felt more freedom going out as compared to his sister. Furthermore, his parents also reported some gender differences. As it pertains to going out, Jack stated the following:

Whenever my sister went out, they kind of gave her a little speech kinda like, be careful, to watch herself, to see who she surrounds herself with, so I think being male did give me a different experience growing up.
Jack’s mother stated that she had a harder time when her daughter left home for college as compared to her son. Additionally, she stated “Atodavia tenemos la mentalidad de que como es hombre se cuida solito.” [We still have the mindset that since he is a man he can take care of himself.]

Jazzel also talked about gender differences she experienced in her home growing up and this had to do with her own parents’ role in the family. Jazzel indicated that her father was the man of the house and described him as a machista, whereas she described her mother as self-sacrificing. Interestingly, she indicated that even though her father acted like a macho, he did not act that way with her. He actually encouraged he to be strong and voice her opinions. Jazzel felt that some of the advice she received from her parents of being safe and taking care of herself were more related to her gender; that, as a female, she always needed to be careful of her surroundings.

Juan indicated that his teenage sister is also planning to pursue a college degree and he feels that his parents would have a much harder time letting her go, but ultimately would also encourage her to pursue college. Similarly, Isabel’s parents indicated that it was very difficult for them to let their daughter go to college, despite wanting her to continue her education. They describe that the difficulty in letting her go had to do with her gender. Her father stated the following: “pensamos que las mujeres tienen mas riesgos que un baron.” [we think that women have more risks than a male.]

The participants had different experiences with gender roles in their respective families most of which had to do with going out as well as perceptions on their gender, for example, that men take care of themselves, that females need to be careful or learn
how to cook. Despite these gendered views none of them affected their ability to pursue higher education. In fact, all the participants’ parents encouraged and supported their goals to pursue a college degree.

Another family value that was discussed directly by three of the participants was the value their family placed on education. Juan, Isabel, and Jack all discussed that they were encouraged to do well academically and to pursue a college degree. For example, Jack described that his parents expected him to go to college and to be a role model for his younger siblings. Although Jazzel did not report this active encouragement from her parents at a young age, she felt that because her older siblings and aunts/uncles had not attended college, her parents may not have wanted to keep their hopes up about her. It was not until Jazzel was in high school and she excelled academically that they began to see that she did want to go to college. Ultimately, her family was also very supportive and encouraged her decision to attend college.

All of the participants received consejos from their family when they left home for college. Most of the advice received had to do with taking care of oneself, being good, and working through difficulties.

The male participants, Juan and Jack, were both advised to focus on their studies in college and not get distracted with girlfriends. Specifically, Juan’s mother stated, “work hard,” and also told her son not to start a family too young— to wait until he was prepared. Jack’s mother also advised him to be careful with college women, stating the following: “que se cuidara de las muchachas, que estudiara, que fuera, que valla hacer lo
que tenga que hacer, estudia primero y después a divertirse.” [to take care of himself from young ladies, to study, to do what he needed to do, study first and then have fun.]

Isabel and Jazzel were given consejos that related to self-care and being careful and safe. Specifically, Jazzel reported that she had adopted this advice and found that she has been extremely careful when walking to parking lots on campus and opening the door to her apartment. Furthermore, her mother also reminded her to engage in self-care and take care of herself to make sure she is eating and sleeping. Similarly, Isabel’s mother had a conversation with her about her new independence, but advised her to “be careful, be wise about your choices.” She also would encourage her daughter to engage in self-care when she was feeling stressed. She would tell her to take a break from her studies, exercise or go for a walk, and then get back to work.

Jack and Jazzel were advised by their parents to work through any difficulties they encountered. For example, Jazzel’s father told her the following:

_Tiene que superar todo eso cualesquier contratiempo que tenga en la vida lo tiene que superar y si ve que ya no lo puede superar que hable para que tenga comunicación con nosotros con sus hermanos para que le digan de que manera solucionarlo. Eso es todo._

[That she has to overcome everything, whatever complication she has in life, she must overcome it. And if she sees that she is unable to do so, to call us, or her brothers/sisters (aunts/uncles), so that they can tell her how to solve it (the issue/problem). That is it.]

Similarly, Jack’s mother also advised him to be patient when he encountered problems and not to give up. She told him the following: “*que siempre buscara la solución, que si una pureta se cierra otras se abren, y hay que no ahogarse en un vaso de agua*” [to always look for a solution, if one door closes, another one opens, and that he should not drown in a glass of water.]
Types of family support experienced in college. Juan, Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel all discussed the types of support that they received from their parents when they left home for college. Among the types of support described was financial support and emotional support. Furthermore, Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel agreed that the support continued past their first year in college. Juan, who was still in his first year, noted that there had not been a change in the support he experienced from the first quarter to the end of the second quarter of his first year. The participants also agreed that their parents were a primary source of support. In addition to their parents, some identified extended family, friends from high school, as well as friends they met in college and or staff in college as a source of support. Similarly, all of the parents described the support they provided to their college children as financial, emotional/psychological, as well as material support.

The financial support that parents were able to provide to their children varied between students. Some parents were able to provide financial support to cover part or all the housing expenses, whereas other parents were only able to provide their children with money from time to time, as their budget allowed. For example, Jazzel reported that she received minimal financial support from her parents, but knew that she could count on their emotional support. Jazzel’s parents also indicated that the financial support they provided their daughter was inconsistent and that they were only able to provide her with what little extra money they had. In Jazzel’s case, she had an extended family that was sometimes able to help her financially or buy her things she needed. Both Juan and Jack indicated that their parents helped them pay their housing expenses. It was difficult for their parents to absorb this cost, but they were able to do it when it became necessary. At
the time of the interview, Juan was deciding if he should sign a contract to live on
campus the next academic year or if he should commute from home and consequently
save on the housing cost. Similar to Jazzel’s family, Isabel’s family was limited in the
amount of financial help that they were able to provide their daughter. From time to time,
they would help her with school expenses that included housing in the summer or books
when she ran out of her financial aid funds.

Some parents talked about material support that they provided to their children.
Material support mostly consisted of various goods that they provided to their college
student. Much of this support consisted of buying them groceries, taking them home-
cooked meals to campus, or packing up various meals to go when they visited home.
They also talked about supplying them with clothing or school supplies. Most parents
also talked about the unexpected cost of moving to college, specifically describing all the
things that their child needed for their dorm or apartment. Given that these participants
were the first in their family to attend college, some parents did not know what to expect
and were buying things at the last minute. The students also reported on all the things
that their parents and extended family provided for them and echoed what their parents
had talked about. Regarding home cooked meals, both Juan and Jack shared anecdotes of
times when their parents came to campus to drop off their favorite meal or came to visit
and cooked a meal for them. This gesture of driving all the way to campus was described
as meaningful to them and demonstrated that they could count on their family to be there
for them.
Another similarity among all the participants and an example of support was that they relied mostly on their families for transportation. None of the participants owned a vehicle and had to rely on others to pick them up and drop them off at campus. For Juan and Jack, this was less of an issue due to the relatively short distance between home and campus, which usually took a little under one hour. Furthermore, in their families, both parents drove and would drive them as necessary. For Isabel and Jazzel, who lived farther away, approximately a 4-hour and 3-hour drive, respectively, it was more of a burden. Nonetheless, at different points, their parents or extended family would provide them with transportation. Jazzel’s mother indicated she felt that this was a form of support, having family members pick up or drop off her daughter at campus. Isabel ended up relying less on her parents for transportation once she made friends who lived near her hometown and were willing to give her ride. Given her father’s hectic work schedule, as well as the distance, it was difficult for him to go pick her up when she needed it. Instead, her parents would give her money to share the gas expense with her friend who was driving.

Both parents and students described the emotional support that was provided, consisting of encouraging messages, knowing that they could count on their family, knowing that their family members trusted them and were proud of them, and that they believed that they could succeed in college. Furthermore, all the participants indicated that they kept in close communication with their families through phone calls, texts, and home visits.
Juan described the emotional support that he received from his parents and grandmother as allowing him to de-stress from school and vent when things were hectic for him. He also reported receiving guidance and spirituality from his family.

Isabel indicated that she knew she could always contact home to share good things or bad things—that her parents would be there for her and show her support. For example, she described an instance when she was stressed studying for exams and her mother guided her to de-stress and, after taking a break, focused back on her studies. Her mother was key in reminding her she was where she wanted to be, in college, and that no one had told her it would be easy; she must keep going. Jack also indicated that he felt that his parents were there for him always. This became clear to him when he saw his mother was willing to make a trip to him in the middle of the week when he needed detergent and he was a new student without transportation. It also meant a lot to him that his mother would come and bring him his favorite food from time to time. Jazzel also indicated that emotional support was “big” for her and it was something that her parents could provide her with always. She stated the following:

The emotional support is always there cause that it what they can always offer to me, so they always, like always, just like telling me, oh we miss you, like we are here for you if you need to talk to us.

Similar to Jazzel’s experience of emotional support, the following are statements made by Juan, Isabel, and Jack concerning family support. Juan stated:

If your family is very supportive, like as mine, it feels like you are not that far from home . . . I could see how like it’s hard, like, if I didn’t have my family’s support, it would be difficult for me to come to school because I would have hardly anybody to vent to, or help me.
Isabel stated the following: “Just knowing that you have someone, you know there is someone there for you, even though, like I said, a right decision, wrong decision, a problem, or a good outcome.” Finally, Jack shared the following about the support he received: “Whenever I feel like I couldn't make it here (on campus), they always brought up the notion that I can make it, that I made it this far and I can make it further.” It appears that the emotional support they received from their parents was very encouraging for them and helped them keep going even when they encountered difficulties.

**Finding my place in college, Soy Latina/o.** The theme of finding my place in college, soy Latina/o is related to, but distinct from, adjusting to college, in that it encompasses the student’s awareness of her/his ethnic identity and how this affected how they felt on campus. For most of the college student participants, finding their place on campus was a journey of self-discovery when they found themselves in a university environment where they were not part of a numerical majority.

Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel all shared the journey of finding their place and the factors that led them to feel more comfortable on campus. Although Juan also addressed this issue, it may have been less salient to him, given that he was still in his first year and therefore still navigating campus to find his place. Furthermore, unlike the other participants, Juan did not feel that his ethnic identity had affected him in any negative way on campus. Some of the factors experienced by the students were culture shock, feeling like they did not belong, noticing they were part of a numerical minority, feeling like others perceived them as educationally inferior, and, for some, instances of discrimination. The students also talked about things that helped them fit in on campus
and these included knowing someone on campus when they moved in, finding a campus organization in which they felt comfortable, being able to hold on to and speak Spanish, and communicating with parents.

Experiencing culture shock and feeling like they did not belong was common among the participants. For Isabel, the culture shock was experienced once she was on campus, living among different cultures. She had had almost no exposure to Asian culture, which was very prominent on her college campus and, consequently, she felt out of place. Similarly, Jazzel felt somewhat overwhelmed living among individuals of different cultures. She stated the following: “I feel like, at first I felt out of place because there is a lot of White and Asians here and I felt like out of place.” For Jack, sitting in one of his classes made it obvious to him that others around him were very different from him; that he was one of only a few Latinos in this large class. Being one of a few Latinos made him feel like he had to prove to others that he did belong; that it was not a “fluke” that he was a student there. Although Jack felt that he had to prove to others he belonged on campus, Jazzel described feeling that others perceived that she was not at the same educational level as her peers. She stated the following: “I felt like in a way like they had, they perceived that their education was better than mine and maybe it was.” The feeling of not fitting in was heightened for Jazzel during her first job on campus, which was not a good fit for her, and also in her first attempt at joining a campus organization. The vision of community service she had, outreaching to high school students, was not the same that the organization practiced, like serving the homeless and volunteering at hospitals. She was left wondering if she had made the right choice in attending her university. Unlike
Jack, Isabel, and Jazzel, Juan did not express feeling out of place on campus or feeling that his ethnicity had a negative impact on him or how others perceived him. He stated, “I’ve yet to experience like where my ethnicity comes into like a problem with anybody else.” Furthermore, he also did not feel that he had to “compromise” his culture. The only way he felt that his Latino culture affected his education was that it made it more difficult to adjust to college. He stated the following:

I feel that being a Latino in higher education is a bit difficult because you are used to like being so close to family but you come out, off to college, where there is a great distance between you and your family and is kind of hard to adjust as well.

Eventually, Jazzel did find a campus organization that was a good fit for her and where she felt comfortable. Similarly, Isabel also discussed joining a campus organization that helped her feel comfortable on campus. Isabel was introduced to a Latina/o organization by her cousin, who was also a student on campus. She described enjoying being able to speak Spanish and not worry if a Spanish word came out in conversation. It was through this group that she made more friends and found that some lived not too far from her hometown. These friends allowed her to visit home more frequently and would offer her rides when they were going home for the weekend. For Jazzel, finding the Latino organization on campus finally allowed her to feel comfortable to be who she really was. Jack found comfort in having friends from his high school who were also attending the same campus. During his freshman year they did a lot of things together, shared meals, and explored the campus, and this helped him feel more at ease. Juan also talked about having some acquaintances from high school with whom he frequently spent time, in addition to having a cousin who was an upper class student.
Among all the participants, only Isabel expressed encountering a situation where she felt that she was being discriminated against. This happened when students from her campus anonymously made discriminatory remarks on a school Facebook account. Additionally, she reported that students had mistaken her ethnic identity due to her fair skin and blonde hair. She feels that they treat her differently once they realize that she is a Latina. She stated the following regarding this situation:

I have experienced like that discrimination like once they know, since typically they don’t think I’m Hispanic at first, for me it’s like, once they find out, it is like typically they look down on it, but they don’t really tell you, but you can tell. Like I can feel it.

The emotional journey of the transition to college. The emotional journey of leaving home and beginning college life was described by Juan, Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel and their respective parents. The emotional experiences of the students and their parents can be best described as a mix of emotions. The words the students used to describe this momentous occasion in their lives included feeling excited, stressed, rushed, and anxious. The parents, on the other hand, described their emotions as feeling proud, happy, concerned, worried, and sad. Although all the college students described similar emotions, they experienced them at different moments in time. For some, it happened while they were packing to move, whereas for others, the emotions really set in once they were on campus. The parents also talked about their feelings, some disclosing that they felt sad months before their child left to college whereas others appeared to avoid emotion altogether. In fact, for some, saying goodbye to their child was the first time they really showed emotion directly to their son or daughter.
Juan was the only one of the college students who did not indicate having mixed feelings about going to college. He described his emotional state as “excited.” He further elaborated on his emotions when he stated the following:

I was really excited to begin this new chapter in my life. Um, at some point I really got desperate to go. I don’t know, I just got really excited to go and I didn’t really think of my family or anything like that. I just wanted to leave and start school.

The other participants, Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel, described having mixed feelings. Although they identified feeling excited about beginning college, they also reported feeling stressed or anxious about this new step in their lives. Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel also described feeling rushed at the end to get all their belongings packed or needing to buy last minute things prior to their move. For Jazzel, once she was done packing and had left a few outfits out, reality set in that she was really moving away from home. She reacted by becoming physically sick to the point where she was in bed and needed to be pampered by her mother. Looking back at her experience, she feels it was not that she was really sick, but that she needed to feel close to her mother. Her illness, whether real or feigned, allowed her to recreate the dependent relationship that had likely brought her so much comfort in the past. Additionally, she noticed that her mother was not tearful about her leaving anymore and had come to terms with her moving away. For Jack, setting foot on campus made everything real for him. He stated the following:

I don’t think I felt anything the weeks leading up, I didn’t really feel anything until I was already on campus, that was when everything hit me (laughs) like a ton of bricks. Cause then, that’s when I felt like I’m going to be on my own; this is where I mature as an adult.
Similarly, the parents of all the student participants also described having mixed feelings about their son or daughter moving out of their home to attend college. Their mixed feelings can be understood in the following statements. Isabel’s father indicated feeling sad about her departure. “Tristes porque ya se esta rompiendo la, la familia ya se esta saliendo de la casa.” [Sad because the, the family is breaking apart and she is leaving home.] Although he described feeling sad, Jazzel’s father also stated feeling hopeful, sharing the following: “Triste y ilusionados, pidiendole mucho a Dios que logre sus metas” [The same sad and hopeful, asking God to allow her to reach her goals.]

Similarly, Jack’s father stated the following about his son leaving home:

*Yo me sentia mas triste, porque ya se iva mi hijo por eso, se siente pues, como que ya me habia quedado un poco muy solo. Todo el tiempo habiamos estado todos juntos y un dia de pronto se va, pues como que no.*

[I felt more sad because my son was leaving, that is why it felt like I had been left somewhat, very alone. We had been together all the time and then one day all of a sudden he leaves, well no.]

Jack’s mother also explained the difficult time she had letting go of her son and how her husband had to intervene and tell her that she should stop showing up on campus to visit him when he was not expecting her. She stated the following,

*A mi si me costo mas trabajo como dejarlo ir. Haveces yo llegaba sin avisarle y me decia, Mom pero hoy no pensaba ir a la casa.*

[For me it was harder to let him go. Sometimes I would get there without letting him know ahead of time and he would tell me, Mom, but today I wasn’t thinking of going home.]

Regarding her husband’s intervention, she stated the following: *Me hizo cortar el cordon umbilical muy drasticamente.*” [He made me cut the umbilical cord very drastically.]
Jack and Isabel talked about having their fathers express emotions, or be affectionate towards them, for the first time when they were leaving to college. Isabel reported it was the first time she saw her father cry. She stated the following:

At first it was hard; it was harder to like see my dad cry, something I had never seen. He wasn’t the emotional showing type, so it was like I had never seen him cry, so I’m a cry baby, so I automatically started breaking down crying.

Jazzel, on the other hand, indicated that she felt her father avoided expressing any emotions and did not go to drop her off to campus. She believes that he did not want to go for fear that he may show his emotions towards her. In his interview, he expressed that showing emotions was wrong to do because it may negatively affect his daughter. Jazzel stated the following about her father not displaying emotions to her,

So my dad is really, he tries to be all strong and show no emotions. Like my mom would tell me I heard your dad crying last night, but like in front of me he would say comments like, I’m so glad you are leaving.

**Strategies for college adjustment.** Strategies for college adjustment is a theme that deals with the factors and strategies that aided these first generation college students to adjust to college. It was found as a separate theme in three of the four cases that include Juan, Isabel, and Jazzel. Although Jack also talked about his adjustment process, he did so in the context of how he adjusted as a Latino male; consequently it is addressed under the theme of Finding my place in college, soy Latina/o. Some found it difficult to adjust to college academics, whereas others found the social aspect of adjustment much more difficult. Juan learned the importance of being in class on time and using his time wisely. Jazzel and Isabel both found it easier to adjust once they felt comfortable and found a group of friends on campus. Finally, most relied on the skills they had brought
with them to succeed, such as hard work and dedication, and not giving up, even when times were stressful.

Juan, who was still in his first year of college, discussed how important time management was for him. During his first quarter, he would make “to do” lists that kept him on top of what needed to get done. During his second quarter, he stopped making his lists and then felt like he was running out of time or rushing to get things done. Ultimately, he learned it was important to keep up with his “to do” lists and to manage his time better. He stated the following about not writing his “to do” lists: “Not seeing it made me think like I have a lot of time to do this and I just didn’t.” Additionally, Juan also mentioned that having a role model, someone who he knew had gone through college and succeeded, was helpful in his adjustment. In his case, his uncle who had recently graduated with a bachelor’s degree was that role model who he would often think about and this would reassure him that he, too, could succeed in college.

Isabel talked about having a difficult time with her college classes and indicated that they were not all comparable to the advanced placement courses she had taken in high school. She stated the following:

It was hard, coursewise, because even though I took AP classes in high school, it was a lot different. I know they are supposed to prepare you, and this and that. I still thought like college courses are still like very difficult.

Despite working hard, she did not always earn a grade of A. This was also true for Jazzel, who similarly talked about not always earning an A in all her courses. For Jazzel, talking to her mother about not always earning an A in exams helped her get a better perspective and not feel too bad about a B.
Both Isabel and Jazzel talked about the importance of finding a group on campus that made them feel comfortable on campus and provided them with support. Finding a Latina/o organization on campus allowed them to adjust socially and make more friends. For Jazzel, finding this group allowed her to be herself. She also relied on the encouragement her family gave her and, over time, she began to feel empowered. Unlike Isabel, who openly communicated with her parents about her struggles of adjustment, Jazzel was selective in what she told her family. Most of the time she told them she was fine, even though she was struggling.

Although Isabel and Jazzel were able to adjust socially, Juan indicated that he is still working on this aspect of his adjustment. He realizes he needs to venture out of his comfort zone, beyond his roommates and other high school friends who also attended his college campus.

Isabel and Jazzel’s parents talked about their daughter’s adjustment to college. Isabel’s mother indicated that it was difficult for her daughter at first, but felt that she was making progress in adjusting. She indicated that Isabel was more independent and better able to problem solve on her own. Her assessment of her daughter’s adjustment was more in line with Isabel’s own perception of adjustment, an on-going process that gets easier with time. Jazzel’s mother’s perception was skewed, in large part due to the things that Jazzel omitted telling her mother. In her mother’s view, Jazzel had done fine adjusting to college. Her father also believed that Jazzel had easily adjusted and that the challenges she encountered, she overcame easily. Jazzel indicated feeling that she had adjusted already, but her journey to get there was not as easy as her parents believed. She stated
the following about how she felt initially on campus, “I know the first year, I felt really out of place. I never told anybody how I felt, but I know at first I wanted to transfer.”

Each student had their own journey of adjustment and relied on different sources of support and encouragement to feel better on campus. Although some found the academics in college challenging, others struggled more with the social aspect. Some found comfort and support in their family, whereas others tried to do things on their own or relied on college friends and college organizations. They also found their own personal skill set as a resource towards adjustment. For some, it was relying on their hard work ethic and dedication or learning about the importance of time management and “to do” lists.

**Challenges encountered in college.** Challenges encountered in college was a theme that emerged in three of the cases: Isabel Heredia, Jazzel Medina, and Jack Nieto, and included their respective families. For Jazzel, the challenges encountered in college had to do with misconceptions that some of her “younger” family members had about her life as a college student. Jazzel stated the following about some of her family members not understanding what college life is really like. “I feel like my cousins who are younger have this, like, really they clearly watch movies too much, because they think like I’m just having fun.” Another challenge she encountered was communicating with her parents about her college major and future career goals, for fear that she would not live up to what they would want her to become—a lawyer or doctor. She stated the following about opening up to her parents about her major, “I don’t feel the courage to
say ‘no I’m not doing that (going to medical school)’, so sometimes it is stressful, like wanting to make them happy.”

For Isabel, the challenges encountered had to do with being independent on campus, financial difficulties, and transportation to and from campus. Isabel grew up in a home where she was not allowed the freedom that most young adults have. Going to college gave her a new found freedom, where she had to learn to become more independent. Financially, she was torn between getting a job that could negatively affect her academic performance and burdening her family with extra costs that would be difficult for them to manage.

Para ella como primera de ir al colegio y como hija de un hogar de bajos ingresos y es una persona muy responsable a ella le lastima le duele mucho tener que pedirle dinero a su papa por que sabe que no hay dinero extra.

[For her as the first to go to college and for a daughter from a low income home, she is a very responsible person and it hurts her, it pains her to have to ask her father for money because she knows there is no extra money.]

Finally, transportation became an issue for Isabel when she wanted to visit home. Since she did not own a vehicle, she had to rely on friends for rides when they were going home and, consequently, could not visit home whenever she wanted.

I would be like its not even that far 3 and a half or 4 hours depending on traffic you know, its not too far and you don’t have car so you have to depend on other people and the bus takes like 10 hours cause I have done it.

The more than 3.5-hour drive from home to campus made it very difficult for her family to pick her up and drop her off, which was further complicated by her father’s hectic work schedule.

For Jack Nieto and his family the challenges they encountered surrounded two issues: financial aid troubles and his parents’ concern about his roommate. The financial
aid problems were particularly difficult for Jack and they brought some tension with his parents. His parent’s indicated that Jack became upset when he realized that the issue with the financial aid was something that his parents were aware of and had not taken the steps to fix. His father stated the following: “Un día que nos reclamo enojado, que por que no había arreglado ese problema.” [One day he was upset and confronted us, asking why we hadn’t fixed the problem.] In the end, his parents were able to cover the cost that was not covered with his financial aid. Jack’s parents also discussed some concerns they had about their son having a roommate. They felt uneasy about Jack living with someone he did not know and were concerned about how the roommate would interact with Jack. Once Jack’s parents learned that he was placed in a dorm with a friend from high school, they felt much better and their worries were lessened.

This cross-case analysis revealed a better understanding of the role that family support had on the transition and adjustment to college of these four first generation Latina/o college students. The themes cultural values and consejos in higher education and types of support received in higher education in this cross-case analysis were the most influential in the transition and adjustment to college. Specifically, these two themes directly involved the parents of the college student. In the former theme, the parents gave their child various consejos that dealt with messages of working hard in college, working through problems they encounter, and engaging in self-care. The ability to work through difficulties encountered is crucial for students to adjust to college. Having that encouragement from family would allow them to keep working hard and moving forward despite any difficulties. Furthermore, the messages of self-care are also ideal for a healthy
adjustment to college. Finally, the cultural value of *familismo* that you are working towards something to benefit the family as a whole also serves as a motivator to do well and adjust to college. The latter theme, on the types of support received, reveals the importance of the emotional support that the students received from their parents. Knowing that they are supported, that their family is there for them when they need them and that their family members make an effort to remain connected despite the distance allows them the security and confidence to go out and find their place on campus and consequently adjust to college life.

Furthermore, all the student participants indicated that their parents were supportive of their educational goals. Parents wanted more opportunities for their children and a better future than they ever had. They were very proud that their son or daughter was pursuing a college degree. At times some parents struggled emotionally when their son or daughter moved out of their home to attend college. However, at the end they understood that it was in their child’s best interest. For Isabel, moving out of the state to attend college was frowned upon by her parents. Mr. and Mrs. Heredia were concerned that Isabel would be too far away from home.

**Unique Themes among the Four Cases**

As noted in the introduction of this cross-case analysis, a discussion of the differences or unique themes that arose in some of the cases will be briefly highlighted. These themes were unique in that they were only present among one or two of the cases, as opposed to at least three or four of the cases. These unique themes include the
following: (a) parental involvement in the college experience and (b) lessons learned in college.

**Parental involvement in the college experience.** Parental involvement in the college experience was a theme that was described by Juan and his parents, where Juan described how his parents involved themselves in his education. The parental involvement included planting the seed to attend college, guiding their son in his decision-making process when he chose a major and when he was considering commuting to campus, as well as providing him with transportation to and from campus. Juan appears to value the input he receives from his parents and his grandmother and takes it into consideration when making decisions. In listening to their suggestions he also weighs in with his thoughts and feelings about the situation at hand before making his decision. This was apparent when he was contemplating commuting from home to campus versus living on campus for his second year in college.

**Lessons learned in college.** Lessons learned in college was another theme found in the case of Juan Fernandez and his family. This theme reflects on things that Juan or his parents did not expect and learned as their son attended college. In particular, they discussed how expensive it was for their son to live on campus, and the possibility that he may commute to campus the following year. Juan also discovered that there were certain things that he chose not to discuss with his parents, such as experiencing anxiety on tests or having a hard time socializing on campus. Finally, his parents also indicated that they wished they had gone to college in order to be able to guide their son now that he was in college.
The six themes (finding my place in college, soy Latina/o, the emotional journey of transition to college, college adjustment strategies, and challenges encountered in college) represent themes that were relevant across all or most of the cases presented. The emotional journey of the transition to college explored the emotions experienced by family members and students as they left home to go to college. Most described having mixed feelings about the transition. The parents described being proud and worried, whereas the students expressed feeling excited and anxious. The theme, finding my place in college, soy Latina/o, explored the process of feeling comfortable on campus as an ethnic minority student. Finding that they fit in as a Latina/o on campus then facilitated the adjustment process as well. The college adjustment strategies theme describes the process of adjusting socially and academically as well as other factors that the students felt were an aid in their adjustment to college. Finally, the theme challenges encountered in college describes some difficulties that were experienced by either the student or their parents during the transition to college and subsequently as the student adjusted to college life. Together these six themes reveal the experience of four first generation college students as they move from home and transition to college life and ultimately begin the process of adjustment while also highlighting the role that parents had in this process, particularly as it related to providing support to their daughter or son.
Chapter 5

Discussion

This final chapter discusses the findings from this multiple case study on the role of family support among first generation Latina/o college students. In a multiple case study, the discussion section consists of highlighting the findings and then explaining how these findings fit within the existing literature. Specifically, the discussion will address the three main research questions and subquestions that were presented in the introduction of this study. These findings were derived from the themes that were found across the cases and helped the researcher arrive at “conclusions” or “lesson learned from studying the cases” (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). Stake (1995) refers to these conclusions as “assertions.” Additionally, the limitations of the study will be presented, followed by recommendations for future research and practice. The final part of this chapter will include a summary and concluding statements about these research findings.

The findings of this study give the reader an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of four Latina/o first generation college students who reflected back on the support that they received from their family as they were transitioning to college and adjusting to college life. This in-depth understanding is further enriched by the inclusion of their parents’ voices, who also discussed the departure of their son or daughter to college and the support that they were able to provide when their child left home.

A total of five themes emerged in the cross-case analysis and consisted of the following: (a) cultural values and consejos in higher education, (b) types of support received in higher education, (c) finding my place in college, soy Latina/o, (d) emotional
journey of the transition to college, and (e) college adjustment strategies. Taken together these themes represent the journey of four first generation college students as they entered unknown territory, the world of higher education.

Research Question 1: How do first generation Latina/o college students experience family support in their college adjustment?

All of the student participants in this study described the type of support that they received from their parents. All acknowledged that they received emotional and financial support from their parents in various ways. All felt that their parents and other family members were proud of their accomplishments and supportive of their decision to go to college. Furthermore, the support that they received from their parents continued throughout their stay in college.

Although the primary source of support came from the students’ parents, some of the student participants indicated that they had other extended family members supporting them, including grandparents, siblings, cousins, and aunts and uncles. For most of these first generation college students, then, family consisted not only their nuclear family, but extended family as well. This study provides a more in-depth understanding of these students and expands the literature by exploring who the key players are in the provision of family support to them. Now we have a clear picture that other family members do, in fact, contribute, and at times supplement, the support that parents provide their first generation college student.

Research Question 1a. How is family support defined by first generation Latino/a students? Only one of the student participants, Jazzel gave a definitin of what
family support is or should be. She stated that family support means that your family is there for you always no matter what even if they do not agree with your choices. The other student participants gave a description of what it means to have family support. For Isabel, it was knowing she could always count on her family and go to them with good things or bad things and that they would be there for her. Similarly, Jack, talked about knowing that his parents would always be there for him. Juan indicated that family support was important for him and that his parents also let him know he could always reach out to them for anything he needed. It appears that for the participants, family support meant unconditional support and having someone there whenever they needed them.

**Research Question 1b. How is family support differentially experienced by Latino females and males?** The experience of family support by the female and male participants in this study did not differ as it related to them going to college. All the parents of the participants were proud and supportive of their respective daughter or son for pursuing higher education. The male participants, both of whom had a younger female sibling, indicated that they did not feel that their parents were sending their respective sister any different message than the ones they had received regarding going to college. However, they did indicate that their parents may have more difficulty emotionally in letting them go. This was supported by one of the mothers, who indicated that it was more difficult to let her daughter go to college than when her son had left. One of the female participants, Isabel, had shown interest in attending college out of state. Her experience in letting her parents know about her desire to move out of state was not well
received by her parents. Isabel’s experience with her parents mirrors the lived experience of Orozco (2003), who discusses her parents’ lack of support in attending college outside the state, and eventually decided not to go against their wishes, opting for a university in her home state. Although Isabel’s parents were supportive of her going to college, they did not want her to be so far away from home. In the end, she decided to attend college in-state and only a few hours from home. It is unclear if her parents’ lack of enthusiasm for her moving outside the state for college was related to her gender, although at times Isabel felt it may have been part of the reason. Previous research has found that female Latinas who decide to move away from home to attend college experience negative consequences (Falicov, 1998). The other female participant, Jazzel, indicated that she felt she received advice from her parents concerning staying safe because she was a female. She further elaborated that, consistent with their warnings, she found herself being extremely cautious when she was alone in her apartment or walking to a parking lot.

**Research Question 1c. How does family support affect the college adjustment of first generation Latina/o students?** From the findings of this study, it appears that the family support that the first generation college students received from their parents was well received and beneficial to them. Two of the participants benefited from the financial support of their parents at critical times; for example, during the summer, to ensure they would have a place to live for the fall; or just to be able to make the housing payments when financial aid was not provided by the university. Parental financial support was beneficial to buy books, for getting transportation home, for housing, to fulfill other educational endeavors such as study abroad, or simply to have money to go
out to eat with friends or do something fun. One student relied on the financial support of an extended family member to study abroad.

In addition to the financial support, these participants relied on their family for emotional support. The emotional support occurred at different times, usually through phone calls or visits to campus. Some participants indicated calling home to vent about their feelings when they were upset about something that had happened. Others called home when they were feeling overwhelmed or stressed with their school work, or when they were studying for exams. One of the participants called home when needing something, such as detergent, during the first week of classes, or due to missing home-cooked meals. The two male participants lived relatively close to campus and would rely on their parents for transportation. This was also a form of support that both Juan and Jack received from their parents. Additionally, Juan and Jack knew that their parents were there for them whenever they needed it, even if it was for a ride home or to campus.

Although all the student participants acknowledged that the support they received from their parents and extended family members was helpful to them and provided them comfort, some felt that their adjustment was an individual process. That is, they had to learn how to adjust on their own or with the help of their college peers. Past research has found that friends and family both contribute to feelings of well-being among Latina/o college students, although perceived support from friends was found to be slightly higher in contributing to well-being than perceived parent support (Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2003). This is also consistent with research with adolescents from
various cultural backgrounds in the U.S., which finds that peers are particularly influential at this stage of development. For other participants in this dissertation study, parental support was seen as contributing to their overall transition and adjustment. These findings are also consistent with previous research studies that have found family support to be strongly related to college adjustment with Latino college students (Phinney, Dennis, & Gutierrez, 2005).

**Research Question 2: How do parents provide support during their daughter/son’s college adjustment?**

The provision of support by parents to their respective first generation college student was multifaceted. There were many similarities found across the four cases. The types of support provided included emotional and financial, as well as material support. Central to this research was the understanding of how support was provided and of what it consisted. From the findings, I can report that the present study was able to provide a comprehensive insight into the types of support that the parents provided to their college student. Emotional support was provided through many conversations that parents had with their children when they were preparing to leave, as well as once they were living on campus. Parents told their children that they were proud of them and that they believed they could accomplish their goals. Additionally parents transmitted support to their children through the advice they gave them—to keep on working hard and trying their best, even though college would be difficult at times. The message of perseverance was conveyed to the first generation college students by their parents at different times, but, most importantly, when they saw their children struggling. The parents felt that the
support they provided was beneficial. Some parents also noted that the emotional support they were able to provide was even more important than any financial support they provided.

**Research Question 2a. What other family members, if any, are involved in providing support to their son/daughter?** In most of the cases, the family members involved in providing support were primarily the parents. In addition to parents, siblings of the college student participants also provided support, especially those siblings who were closer in age to the college student. For Juan, his paternal grandmother was a source of emotional support, whereas an uncle who had recently graduated from college served as a role model of what he could achieve. For Isabel, Juan, and Jazzel, other extended family members providing support included cousins and aunts and uncles. Both Isabel and Juan indicated having an older cousin who was enrolled at their college campus and who was helpful to them at one time or another during their adjustment process. Specifically, Isabel talked about her cousin showing her around campus and introducing her to a Latina/o organization at their university.

**Research Question 2b. How do the parents describe the provision of support to their daughter/son when they went to college? Has this support changed over time?** The parents interviewed in this study reported that the support they provided their respective children when they left for college had remained constant. They stated that they had always provided support in any way that they could and would continue to provide support to their child. None reported that the support had changed since leaving for college. The one thing that changed at times was the amount of financial support
provided. However, this depended on the needs of the student and the financial means of the family at any particular time. As one parent noted, their family’s ability to provide financial help depended on the extra income they had at the end of the month. As far as emotional support, all of the parents interviewed indicated that their children could always count on them for whatever they needed, and that they would do their best to be able to help them. The consistent provision of emotional support by parents and their willingness to be there for their children is consistent with the cultural value of *familismo*. Given that Latinas/os place a high value on family unity and that family comes first, it would follow that parents would feel a sense of obligation towards their children even when they are no longer living at home.

**Research Question 2c. How has their son/daughter moving away for college affected the family (their relationship with the parents, and/or siblings)? How do they remain connected?** All of the parents indicated that the departure of their son or daughter to college was an emotional experience. They shared that they had mixed feelings about it, feeling sad and empty that their children was leaving, but excited and proud of the great opportunity they had. Regarding family relationships, many parents felt that their relationship with their college student had become closer now that he or she had left their home. They talked more frequently and in greater depth to one another, usually through phone calls. Additionally, some indicated that they felt they treated their son or daughter less like a child and more like an adult. Two of the college students reported that they felt that their relationship with their fathers had become closer. The father had become more emotionally vulnerable to their child, promoting increased
closeness. Both of these student participants indicated seeing a side of their fathers they had never experienced before. Relationships with siblings were affected in various ways. Some of the student participants felt they had become closer to their siblings or were able to guide them more, now that they were in college. This was true for Jack, Isabel, and Juan, who had younger siblings that were closer in age to them, and who had expressed a desire to pursue higher education. For Jazzel, the relationship with her brother appeared to remain the same. Perhaps the difference was that her brother did not share the same college aspirations.

**Research Question 3: What are the psychosociocultural dimensions of Latina/o family support processes?**

Latina/o family support can be interpreted using the psychosociocultural framework. The psychological, social, and cultural dimensions overlap, and together they help identify and explain the support processes that contribute to college adjustment. As has been highlighted previously, family support was provided to all the student participants by their parents, as well as by other family members. The student participants talked about the types of support they received from their family during their transition and adjustment to college.

The psychological components of family support that were described by parents included messages that they gave to their college student consisting of the following: We are proud of you, we are here for you, we believe in you, and don’t give up when things get difficult. Such messages are examples of emotional support that were provided at different points during their adjustment to college. Also, these messages gave students the
confidence and motivation to persist, especially when under duress. One can speculate that these words of encouragement serve as mechanisms that facilitated their positive self-efficacy and academic persistence.

For all of the participants, family was a great source of support but for some it was also a great source of motivation to go to college and earn a degree. For example, Juan indicated that one of the reasons he went to college was for his family, to be able to help them in the future. He believed that a college education would open the doors for better employment opportunities and consequently greater financial resources than those that his parents had. Similarly, Jack indicated that one of his teachers had mentioned that one of the best gifts you could give your parents was your college diploma. He embraced this message and wanted to give his parents the gift of completing his college degree, while simultaneously serving as a role model for his younger siblings.

In the social dimension, family support was manifested in the different ways the parents showed their support to their children. This included the material and financial support they provided, as well as staying connected through phone calls, visiting them on campus, and providing transportation when they needed it.

As discussed previously, all parents contributed financially to their children at one time or another and the extent of their contribution depended on their financial resources. Monetary contributions were given to the students to pay for textbooks, for housing, for transportation, or just to give them spending money. Material contributions consisted of all the things they needed for their move to the dorms their first year as well as groceries and clothing that parents provided for their college student.
Parents and students maintained contact despite the distance. All participants indicated that they maintained communication using different types of technology, including phone calls, texts, and face time (video telecommunication). Furthermore, some parents would take the initiative to visit their children on campus and to pick them up whenever they needed transportation to or from campus. Given that none of the student participants owned a vehicle, they relied mostly on their parents or other family members when they went home for the weekend or long breaks.

Finally, the parents also provided their children with words of encouragement and support when they talked to them over the phone or when they saw them in person, particularly if they noticed that they were stressed or having a difficult time. For example, Isabel’s mother talked about a time her daughter was struggling during exam week and she encouraged Isabel to take a break and engage in self-care and then go back to studying. Her mother also reminded her that she was where she wanted to be in college, and that at times it would get difficult, but she had to keep pushing forward to accomplish her goals. Similarly, Juan described a time during finals week when he felt alone because he had a Friday final and all his roommates had left for break already. In a conversation with his mother he talked about how he was feeling and his mother decided to come over and cook at his apartment with his whole family. Juan indicated that this made him feel that his family cared for him and were willing to make the drive to campus to provide him with support. Juan enjoyed the company of his family for one evening and was able to relax and eat a home-cooked meal the day before his last final.
In the cultural dimension, family support can be interpreted through the cultural value of *familismo* (strong family ties and that family is a priority) that all student participants and their parents embraced. Despite the fact that the college students had moved out of their parents’ home, the distance did not disrupt the strong family bond that existed. In fact, for some students, having this strong connection made the adjustment process a bit more difficult. Consequently, they relied on staying connected through phone calls, texts, and home visits. Additionally, some of the student participants indicated feeling closer to their parents once they moved out of their home. The student participants talked about making it a priority to be home during the holidays or for family members’ birthdays. The parents also talked about making sure that their college student felt that she or he had a place at home. For example, Jack’s mother made sure that Jack always had his room ready for him for whenever he came home. Additionally, she would consult him regarding his schedule and plan around his availability for family outings. Similarly, Jazzel’s father also indicated that he wanted to make sure his daughter understood that she always had a place at home. Isabel’s mother indicated that having to ask for money weighed heavily on Isabel because she worried about the financial sacrifice that her parents were making and how it would affect their household.

**Research Question 3a. How do the psychosociocultural dimensions of support influence Latina/o college adjustment?** The psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of family support are interconnected in such a way that we are able to appreciate how they come together to influence the adjustment process of Latina/o first generation college students. For example, the messages of encouragement and support
(from the psychological dimension) motivate the student to stay engaged and focused on their college goals. This is further reinforced by the demonstrations of support that the family provides (social dimension), and includes economic and material support, as well as staying connected through calls and visits. At the same time, the importance of family and being able to maintain these ties, despite the distance, gives college students a sense of confidence and self-efficacy that allows them to venture out and find their place on campus. It is this critical step that will eventually lead the college student to begin the adjustment process. As noted earlier, for some students it involved becoming active in a Latina/o student organization; for others it was finding friends on campus that they could relate to that led them to begin to feel comfortable in their new surroundings.

Interestingly, family support remains an understudied area of research for first generation Latina/o college students, despite being considered an important component in their college adjustment. Practitioners and researchers continue emphasizing how parental support must be considered when understanding the college experience, yet, to my knowledge, there are no studies that have looked in depth at this construct. For example, the few quantitative studies that have focused on family support among Latina/o college students have failed to consider the complexity of the support processes and the perspective of both the student and the parents. A qualitative study by Ceja (2004) investigated the role of parents on Chicana students’ educational aspirations and success. All of the participants indicated that their parents were very important in their academic aspirations and success. However, the specific role that parental support had or what it consisted of was not examined. Hence, this dissertation study addressed this important
gap in the literature while also providing support for the psychosociocultural framework in understanding how family support is an important process for the transition and adjustment of the Latina/o first generation college student.

Limitations of Study

All research studies are prone to limitations in various areas, including research design, recruitment, and data analysis. This qualitative multiple case study is no different. As it relates to research design, this study is limited in that it takes place in one particular period of time. This limits the possibility of a more in-depth reflection of their college adjustment and family support across time. Consequently, the participants were only able to reflect on their experiences of adjustment and support from the time they began college to the time of their interview, rather than longitudinally. Given that the college students that participated were first, second and third year students, those students who had been in college longer had more time to deal with their adjustment process and had more opportunities to experience family support than those who were only in their first or second year in college. Whereas the older students maintained that the support from their families remained consistent, it is difficult to determine whether support for all students would maintain consistent.

One of the limitations of the recruitment process is that all the participants of the study were recruited from one large land grant west coast university that is culturally diverse. Consequently, if this study were repeated in a different location of the United States, or at a predominantly white institution, the experiences of the participants might be different than the ones described here. Additionally, even though this study was open
to all Latina/o first generation college students who met the inclusion/exclusion criteria, the ones that participated in this study self-identified as Mexican-Americans. First generation college students of other nationalities may have different experiences of family support. For example, families from Central America that have come to the U.S. fleeing civil unrest in their home countries may have different experiences of support than the ones presented here. Similarly, first generation college students of single parent homes may experience support differently.

One of the limitations of the data collection in this study is that the parents of the first generation college students were the only other sources of data. A more comprehensive approach that aims to investigate Latina/o family support might include interviews with siblings or other family members who have been identified by the student to be a source of support. Additionally, another study might involve the collection of data at different periods of time in the college education of the student. Finally, it might also be helpful to incorporate artifacts as part of the data collection, such as a diary where students journal about support they have received from family members over the course of a semester. In the present study there was the potential for self-selection bias. It is possible that the students who were interested in participating for this study were those who had positive support experiences as opposed to those who felt less supported by their famililes.

In the process of conducting this study, only very minor difficulties were encountered. These were mostly related to the recruitment of participants, specifically male participants. It was difficult to obtain male student volunteers that were interested in
being part of the interviews. At times, they would show interest initially, but would fail to participate in follow-up e-mails or to set the appointment for the interview. A second minor issue had to do with having to re-schedule interview appointments because of a conflict in the student’s schedule, or having them no-show to their scheduled appointment.

It is important to address that the researcher took steps to minimize any bias in interpreting the data provided by the participants. As a Latina first generation college student keeping the researcher role in mind at all times was important and helpful. Furthermore focusing on the true voices of the participants and becoming immersed in the codes and themes allowed the researcher to describe their experiences. Consulting with others and relying on journal entries and notes helped the researcher to remain objective when writing. Self-awareness of feelings and thoughts helped separate personal feelings and experiences from what the students and parent reported. It is also important to note that being a Latina first generation college student helped inform the questions and allowed for relationship building that likely resulted in a deeper understanding of the family support and college adjustment.

Finally it is important to highlight that the findings of this multiple case study (or any case study) cannot be generalized. The findings of each of the cases represent the realities of that student and her or his family only, and do not reflect the realities of other students with similar backgrounds or identities. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population, the purpose of this multiple case study was to provide a rich, thick, description of how family support is experienced by four Latina/o
first generation college students, what it consists of, and how it relates to their adjustment to college.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Researchers should continue to focus on first generation Latina/o college students, as they remain an understudied group with a high college attrition rate. Based on the findings of this study, future research could be carried out within several structures and populations: a developmental qualitative study, a scale development study, a study that focuses on Latino males, and a study that includes other Latina/o nationalities.

The developmental qualitative study would be similar to the one presented in this dissertation, but it would follow a group of students across their undergraduate education, in order to observe the progression of the transition and adjustment to college, as well as the role of support in this process. Second, it would be interesting to develop a scale based on the themes found in this study that would be used to measure family support. Given the lack of culturally appropriate and normed assessment tools, such a scale would be a great resource for practitioners and researchers addressing this understudied area.

Finally, expanding on the present study, researchers should explore family support among other first generation college students of various ethnic backgrounds to determine if the findings of this study are specific to the Latino culture or if they are a function of being first generation college students. In the present study constant communication, and frequent home visits were beneficial among these Latina/o participants and appeared to be embedded within the familismo cultural value. This study should be replicated across other groups to see what is specific to Latina/o families
and what may be common for first generation college student. This is an exciting time to conduct research with first-generation Latina/o college students and the area remains a field of largely unanswered questions.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The parents of first generation college students are often lacking the awareness or college knowledge needed to guide their children towards a college education. Having had no college experience themselves, it is imperative for High Schools to take an active role in guiding both parents and high school students in this process by giving them needed information about colleges, the application process, what to expect when they are in college and financial aid. Parents who participated in this study described being surprised about all the things their child needed when they moved out to go to college.

Furthermore, some lacked knowledge of the differences between attending a community college versus a state college or a private college. Additionally they did not anticipate some of the extra costs they would have to incur. A strong recommendation for administrators at the high school level would be early and frequent information sessions for parents and students that would address the gap in their college knowledge and provide them with the resources needed to better understand the college application process.

Some recommendations for therapists working in college counseling centers would be to focus on outreach to first generation Latina/o college students. A possible point of contact based on some of the participants from this study would be Latina/o campus organizations. Although these organizations were helpful for some of the student
participants in this study in finding a sense of community and finding their place on campus, becoming aware that there are counseling services on campus may also be extremely beneficial for students who are struggling to adapt to college life particularly for those students who do not share their struggles of adjusting with their family members. Rather than just talk about the services offered on campus and leave pamphlets with the counseling center information, it may be beneficial for counselors and therapists to engage with students by offering an interactive presentation. For example, a presentation on stress and relaxation techniques would be beneficial for students. Having the students participate will engage them and perhaps they will consequently be more open about pursuing counseling when they feel they are struggling or need some guidance. Additionally, outreach should occur throughout the year and counseling centers should strive to make themselves visible and approachable on campus. Finding other creative ways to make contact with first generation Latina/o students should be a priority.

Once the Latina/o college student has made an appointment to see a therapist in the counseling center, it would be important to assess this student and determine if she/he is a first generation college student, to inquire about sources of support, to discuss their ethnic identity within the university context, to consider family relationships, and to discuss and explore their transition to college and their college adjustment thus far.

When a therapist inquires about sources of support, they should inquire about sources of support on campus and off-campus, including family members as sources of support. Furthermore, they should inquire about any acquaintances on campus, including extended family members or high school friends that they knew prior to living on campus.
As noted in this study, most of the participants indicated having either friends from high school or cousins who were students on their same campus and were helpful to them in finding their way around campus, or just having someone that they already knew.

As indicated through the findings of this study, the role of the family is central to many Latina/o students. Therefore, exploring the relationships between the student and his/her parents and siblings and how they maintain contact with their families would be of extreme importance. As noted in this study, all participants maintained contact with their family—it consisted of phone calls, texts, and home visits. For some of the participants, calling or texting home occurred daily or every other day. As demonstrated through this research, this constant communication should not be seen as a deficit in their independence, but more as a cultural trait of familismo (familism). For one of the student participants, lack of transportation, and distance from home was an issue that caused her distress at times. For students who had more access to transportation and lived relatively close to campus, going home on the weekends was possible if they wanted to go.

Another area that must be explored when working with first generation college students has to do with any additional factors involved in their transition to and adjustment to college. At times, their transition to and adjustment to college may be facilitated or hindered by how they feel in their new academic environment. Some participants in this study indicated that awareness of their ethnic identity at times made them feel that they were academically inferior (i.e., they experienced an impostor syndrome) to the other students on campus. Therefore, they felt they had to prove to others (and perhaps to themselves, as well) that they belonged in college or they felt that
they had to work harder to achieve their goals. For others, finding a sense of community with Latina/o campus organizations allowed them to feel comfortable and welcomed on campus.

Recommendations for higher education administrators who are interested in the retention of first generation Latina/o college students include programming that involves their parents. Such programs should inform parents of what college life is like, the things the students will need when they are on campus, the difference in workload and study hours as compared to high school, and what to expect from dorm life, to name a few. Additionally, first generation college students should also be offered workshops in which they are taught skills to become successful students. For example, workshops that normalize their transition to college and explore what to expect from the transition, that discuss the psychological consequences of living away from home, and teach time management skills and coursework expectation would likely be of benefit.

Another recommendation pertaining to higher education administration is to create outreach programs to target first generation college students and help introduce them to student campus organizations. As noted earlier, some of the participants in this study benefited greatly from being part of such organizations and, ultimately, these organizations helped facilitate their transition to college.

**Summary and Conclusion**

This study described a rich, detailed, in-depth presentation of the experience of four young adults who were first in their family to attend a research university on the west coast. Specifically, the focus was on the support they received from their parents
who were not college educated. The voices of the students and parents gave us a better understanding of the financial, emotional, and material support that was given by the parents and received by the students as they transitioned to and adjusted to college. Although the financial and material support varied depending on the families’ resources, the emotional support received by the students was strong and consistent throughout their college experience. This study is a starting point in understanding the complexities of family support on the transition and adjustment to college of first generation Latina/o college students. It adds to the limited research on Latina/o first generation college students by identifying the types of support that students receive from their parents as well as to understand the different challenges parents must endure when their child leaves home. We now have a better understanding of what support looks like from parents who have no previous college experience. Although these parents cannot provide their children with guidance on courses to take or help them when they have an academic question, they can provide them with emotional support when they are struggling or when they feel overwhelmed with work. The emotional support received from parents allows the student to feel more confident in what they are doing and their purpose in college.

The student participants were able to provide different perspectives on the support received thus far, some were still in their first year in college whereas others were in their second or third year. The academic journey of Juan, Isabel, Jack, and Jazzel will provide researchers and practitioners with knowledge and awareness of some of the factors that should be taken into consideration when researching or working with first generation Latina/o students. All of the participants benefited greatly from the various types of
support they received from their parents. The support received from parents allowed them to remain in school, when they did not have enough money to pay for housing, it allowed them to stay connected with family by the transportation that their parents provided, it gave them an outlet to vent when things were difficult, and to put things into perspective when they were being hard on themselves. But of most importance, it allowed them to feel that their family was there for them and that they could count on them even though they were no longer living at home.

Although all the students communicated with their parents, some chose not to disclose some of their difficulties of adjustment, but instead relied upon themselves or others on campus to begin to feel a sense of belonging and, ultimately, begin the adjustment process. Some chose not to disclose adjustment difficulties to parents for fear of worrying them and others felt that their parents may not understand their anxiety regarding test taking given that their parents had no college experience. Interestingly, it appears that parental support served as a buffer that provided the students with encouragement and confidence in their ability to succeed in college. Once they had transitioned to college and had felt their families’ support and encouragement, they were able to move forward and take ownership of their adjustment and seek ways to feel connected to their university. For example, the theme finding my place in college discussed going out and joining a Latina/o campus organization, which was helpful for some of the student participants and was an important step in their sense of belonging and feeling part of the larger campus community.
As I reflect back on when I began conceptualizing this study, various thoughts and feelings come to mind. In the process of conducting this dissertation, many lessons were learned, such that, if I were to do it again, I would change some things that would make the data collection and analysis more efficient. For example, in the recruitment process, I would personally reach out to the students through campus organizations or through their classes, and this would most likely increase the pool of interested participants. I found that just reaching out through e-mail listservs was not sufficient in recruiting participants. Second, although I chose to transcribe and translate the interviews of the participants on my own, and it allowed me to become more immersed in the data, it was an extremely tedious process. In a future study, I would hire a bilingual transcriptionist and/or translator to do these tasks for me. This would allow me to use my time more efficiently and spend it coding and analyzing the data. Third, following the students across their college education, from when they first begin through their graduation, would allow for more in-depth understandings of family support over time and would allow for the possibility of collecting multiple sources of information at different times. Additionally, including other family members identified as sources of support would allow for a more comprehensive and richer look at the phenomenon of family support for first generation Latino/a students in college. Thus, this dissertation was limited by only interviewing the parents as sources of support. In the end the this study provided me with the satisfaction to see a project that I envisioned come to life through the voices of the student participants and their parents and in the process learn more about first generation college students, their families, and their experiences of support.
References


Appendix A

Internal Review Approval
November 7, 2014

Patricia Cerda-Lizarraga  
Department of Educational Psychology

Michael Scheel  
Department of Educational Psychology  
38 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0345

IRB Number: 20141114797 EX  
Project ID: 14797  
Project Title: The influence of family support on first generation Latina/o college students: A multiple case study

Dear Patricia:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board’s opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Exemption Determination: 11/07/2014.

1. Your stamped and approved informed consent documents have been uploaded to NUgrant (files with “Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use these documents to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent documents, please submit the revised documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to using them.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB
Appendix B

Informed Consent

B-1: Student Informed Consent Form (English)

B-2: Parental Informed Consent Form (English & Spanish)
Student Informed Consent Form

The influence of family support on first-generation Latina/o college students: A multiple case study

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study that will attempt to understand the role of family support on the transition and adjustment to college of first-generation Latina/o college students. You can decide not to participate. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not you would like to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate in this study because you have reported being a first-generation Latina/o student who has completed their freshman year and whose parent(s) have an interest in participating in this study.

Project: The influence of family support on first-generation Latina/o college students

Purpose of the Project: This study will investigate the role of family support on the transition and adjustment to college of first generation Latina/o college students who have completed their freshman year of college.

Procedures: You will be asked to participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately one hour to one hour and a half of your time. The interview will be audio-recorded and will take place at your home or another location you decide would be more comfortable for you. During this interview you will be asked a series of questions. The first series of questions are directed at building a family tree (also referred to as a genogram) that will focus on your family composition and their educational attainment. The second part of the interview will consist of questions that are designed to allow you to share your experiences regarding your transition and adjustment to college your freshman year and beyond. You will also be asked about family support received during your transition into college. Additionally, you will be asked to fill out a brief demographic sheet that will include demographic information and questions. The interview may take place at your home or another location that will make you feel comfortable.

Risks and/or Discomforts: There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Benefits: The information gained from this study may help us to better understand aspects of transitioning and adjusting to college experienced by first-generation Latina/o students as well as the role that family support has in this process.

Confidentiality: During the interview, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym to insure that your identity is kept confidential. The audio-recording will be assigned the pseudonym that you pick during the interview. The demographic sheet will not identify you. The demographic sheet will only have the pseudonym that you picked during the interview. Audio recordings will only be used to transcribe the interview. Once the interview is transcribed, the audio tapes, interview transcripts will be kept for 5 years in a locked cabinet at the researchers office. You will not be asked to write your name on the demographic sheets. Once all demographic sheets are entered in a database, they will be destroyed. The information obtained during this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be prepared as aggregated data.
Compensation: You will receive a $25.00 gift card to Target for your time in participating in this study.

Opportunity to Ask Questions: You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate or during the study. Or you may call Patricia Cerda-Lizarraga at any time, (402) 730-3403 or email cerda78@hotmail.com or Michael Scheel at (402) 472-0573 or email mscheel2@unl.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

Freedom to Withdraw: You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without it negatively affecting you, your relationship with the investigator or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent: If you wish to participate in this study, you will take part in an audio-recorded interview and fill out a demographic questionnaire.

You are voluntary making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate in this study and understood the information presented to you in this document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_________________________________________  ________ ___________
Signature of Participant (student) Date

I hereby give consent to audio record my interview.

_________________      ___________________
Initials of Participant      Date

In my judgment I am voluntary and knowingly giving informed consent and possess the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

_________________________________________  ________ ___________
Signature of Investigator     Date

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235 Teachers College Hall
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Parent Informed Consent Form

The influence of family support on first-generation Latina/o college students: A multiple case study

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study that will attempt to understand the role of family support on the transition and adjustment to college of first-generation Latina/o college students. You can decide not to participate. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not you would like to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are the parent of a first-generation Latina/o student who has completed their freshman year.

Project: The influence of family support on first-generation Latina/o college students

Purpose of the Project: This study will investigate the experiences of Mexican-Immigrant families who have children who serve as translators and/or interpreters for their families.

Procedures: You will be asked to participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately one hour to one hour and a half of your time. The interview will be audio-recorded and will take place at your home or another location you decide would be more comfortable for you. During this interview you will be asked a series of questions. The interview will consist of questions that are designed to allow you to share your experiences regarding the time when your son/daughter went to college. Specifically on how you and your family dealt with this transition and what type of support if any was provided to your son/daughter during this time. Additionally, you will be asked to fill out a brief demographic sheet that will include demographic information and questions.

Risks and/or Discomforts: There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Benefits: The information gained from this study may help us to better understand the experience of transitioning and adjusting to college experienced by first-generation Latina/o students. that have children who serve as translators and interpreters for their families.

Confidentiality: During the interview, you will be asked to provide a pseudonym to insure that your identity is kept confidential. The audio recording will be assigned the pseudonym that you pick during the interview. The demographic sheet will not identify you. The demographic sheet will only have the pseudonym that you picked during the interview. Audio recordings will only be used to transcribe the interview. Once the interview is transcribed, the audio recording and the interview transcripts will be kept for 5 years in a locked cabinet at the researchers office. You will not be asked to write your name on the demographic sheets. Once all demographic sheets are entered in a database, they will be destroyed. The information obtained during this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be prepared as aggregated data.

Compensation: You will receive a $25.00 gift card to Target for your time in participating in this study.
Opportunity to Ask Questions: You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate or during the study. Or you may call Patricia Cerda-Lizarraga at any time, (402) 730-3403 or email cerda78@hotmail.com or Michael Scheel at (402) 472- or email mscheel2@unl.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

Freedom to Withdraw: You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without it negatively affecting you, your relationship with the investigator or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent: If you wish to participate in this study, you will take part in an audio-recorded interview and fill out a demographic questionnaire. 

You are voluntary making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate in this study and understood the information presented to you in this document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_________________________________________  ________ ___________
Signature of Participant (Parent)     Date

I hereby give consent to audio record my interview.

_________________________________________  ________ ___________
Initials of Participant (Parent)     Date

In my judgment I am voluntary and knowingly giving informed consent and possess the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

_________________________________________  ________ ___________
Signature of Investigator     Date

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Appendix C

Interview Protocol

C-1: Interview I Protocol (Genogram)- College Student

C-2: Interview II Protocol- College Student

C-3: Interview I Protocol – Parent Interview (English & Spanish)
Interview I Protocol (Genogram)- College Student

Introduction
1. Introduce myself
2. Inform the participant of the purpose of the study
3. Introduce Informed consent form to participant and review it.
4. Inform the participant about the interview format, audio recording and note taking that will take place as well as confidentiality.
5. Answer any questions that the participant may have.
6. Test recording device
7. Begin interview and make participant feel at ease.

Questions about Family

Talk to me about your family?

1. Who makes up your family? Do they all live at home?
2. What is your birth order?
3. How many siblings do you have?
4. Were all of your family members born in the U.S? If not, where were they born? and when did they first come to the U.S?

Questions about Family and Education

1. Tell me about your Parents’ education? Where did they attend school and what was the highest completed grade or degree?

2. Tell me about your Siblings education? Where did they attend school and what is the highest grade or degree they completed?

3. Has anyone in your family attended school outside of the U.S? Explain?

4. Tell me about the value your family puts on education? How are these values communicated to you?

5. What role has your family had on your education? How would you describe their involvement in your education?

6. Besides your parents and siblings is there anyone else in your family who has had an important role in you education? Explain what that role is and its importance to your education.
7. Can you describe your relationships with your parents? (mother/father). Are you closer with one of your parents?

   a. How is your relationship with your siblings (brother/sister)?
   b. How is your relationship with other family members mentioned above?
   c. Who do you have a strong relationship with? Do you have any strained relationships with family members mentioned above?
Interview II Protocol- College Student

College Transition

1. Think about the weeks leading up to you leaving home to college.
   a. What was that experience like? How did you feel?
   b. What was the mood in your home like?
   c. How did members of your family react to this upcoming change?
   d. Do you recall any conversations you had with members of your family regarding this? Please describe.
   e. Did members of your family discuss any feelings they had regarding you leaving to college? What did they say?

2. How would describe your college adjustment so far?
   a. What is helping you in the college adjustment process? Can you give me an example.
   b. Of the things you mentioned, which are the most important? What makes them the most important?

3. With regards to family, how would you define family support? What makes up family support for you?
   a. What are the primary components of family support according to you?

4. How has family affected your college adjustment (positive/negative/neutral)?
   a. What role has family played in your college adjustment?

5. How did your family members provide support to you when you moved away from school and started college?
   a. What family members were involved in providing support?
   b. When you think of family members that provided you support, how did they accomplish this? How did they provide support to you?
c. What did the support look like? How did you experience the support offered to you by your family? Would you have liked other types of support?

d. Is there anyone else that provided you with support during your transition to college? If so, describe that support and how that was related to the support you got directly from your family.

6. Think about your first year in college, and the contact you had with family members. Do you recall specific instances or situation when you felt your family was there for you?

   a. What was it that they did that made you feel that they were there for you?
   b. How did you feel about their actions?

   c. Did this display of support affect you in school? If so in what ways?
   d. How did they communicate support for you during your first year? Would you have liked something else from your family?
   e. If you had not received support from your family how would that have been for you?

7. Now that you are in your ________ year of college, Does your family continue to provide you with support?

   a. Can you give me a recent example of how they provide you with support?
   b. Has the support changed over time?
   c. Is there anything you would like different than the way your family give you support presently?

8. Is there anything you wished your family could have done for you to show you support that they did not do? If so explain?

9. How have relationships with members of your family changed now that you are in college?

   a. What do you do to stay connected when you are away at school?

10. Do you feel closer /distanced from them as a result?
11. Has there been a change in the relationship between x, y, z who you identified as providing you with support earlier?

12. On the most challenging days so far in college, have you relied on family members for help or to provide you with support? (emotional and/or psychological support)?
   a. Do you feel your family helps motivate you to succeed in college? If so how do they do this. Explain?

13. Do you feel that your family has certain expectations about you attending college?
   Which family member and what are their expectations?
   a. What are your own expectations of being in college?
   b. What factors do you think contribute to a successful college experience?

14. Do you recall any advice “consejos” that members in your family gave you when you left to college?
   a. Did they offer any consejos regarding being a good student and/or succeeding in college? If so what did they tell you?

15. How do you feel that your ethnicity (being a Latina/o student) affect your college experience?
   a. Do you feel that your ethnicity has affected your college adjustment? If so in what ways? Explain.

16. As a Latina/o (female/male) what messages did you receive from family members about going to college?
   a. Do you believe these messages were related to your gender?
   b. Would these messages have been different if you were of the opposite sex?
Interview I Protocol – Parent Interview

Introduction
1. Introduce myself
2. Inform the participant of the purpose of the study
3. Introduce Informed consent form to participant and review it.
4. Inform the participant about the interview format, audio recording and note taking that will take place as well as confidentiality.
5. Answer any questions that the participant may have.
6. Test recording device
7. Begin interview and make participants feel at ease.

1. Think about the weeks leading up to your (son’s name/daughter’s name) leaving home to college.
   a. How was that experience like for you?
   b. How did you feel? (both father and mother)
   c. Did you have any concerns about the move to college?
   d. What was the mood in your home like? (both father and mother)
   e. How did members in your family react to this upcoming change?
   f. Do you recall any conversations your child regarding this? Please describe.
   g. Did you discuss your feelings with your child about him/her leaving to college? What did you tell him/her?
   h. Would you have done anything differently if you had it to do again?

2. How did you and other members in the family provide support to your son/daughter when they moved away from school and started college?
   a. What family members were involved in providing support?
b. When you think of family members that provided support to ______________, how did they accomplish this? How did they provide support to you?

c. What did the support look like?

d. Is there anyone else that provided ______________ with support during your transition to college?

3. Think about your child’s first year in college, and the contact you had with him/her. Do you recall specific instances or situation when you did something to provide support to your child?

a. What was it that you did that made you feel you were providing support and comfort to your child?

b. How did you feel about these actions?

c. Do you feel that these displays of support affected your child in school? If so in what ways?

4. Now that your child is in his/her ________ year of college, Do you and your family continue to provide your child with support?

a. Can you give me a recent example of how this support has continued?

b. Has the support changed over time?

c. Is there anything you wished you could have done for your child you to show you support that you did not do or were unable to do? If so explain?

d. How have relationships with your child changed now that they are in college?

5. What do you do to stay connected when your child is away at school?

6. Do you feel closer /distanced from your child as a result of him/her going away to college?

7. What advice did you give your daughter/son when she left to college?

8. Is there anything else you would like to add about your child going to college and or the support you provided while he/she is in school?
a. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding the things we have discussed today?


**Interview I Protocol – Parent Interview (Spanish Version)**

**Introduction**

1. Introduce myself
2. Inform the participant of the purpose of the study
3. Introduce Informed consent form to participant and review it.
4. Inform the participant about the interview format, audio recording and note taking that will take place as well as confidentiality.
5. Answer any questions that the participant may have.
6. Test recording device
7. Begin interview and make participant feel at ease.

1. Recuerde las semanas antes de que su hija/hijo ___________ se fue de su casa para ingresar a la Universidad.
   a. ¿Cómo fue esta experiencia para ustedes?
   b. ¿Cómo se sintieron sobre su partida? (describe sus sentimientos acerca de la partida de su hija/o a la Universidad)
   c. ¿Tenia alguna preocupación acerca de que su hija/hijo se mudara (se fuera a vivir) a la Universidad?
   d. ¿Cómo estaba el animo/humor/ambiente en su casa durante este tiempo? (ambos padre y madre)
   e. ¿Cómo reaccionaron miembros de su familia con este cambio en su hogar?
   f. ¿Recuerda alguna conversación que tuvo con su hija/hijo acerca de esto? Por favor describa.
   g. ¿Conversaron con su hija/hijo acerca de sus sentimientos relacionados con su partida a la Universidad? Que le dijeron a su hija/hijo?
   h. ¿Hubieran manejado la situación de diferente manera de como se llevo a acabo? ¿Si tuviera que hacerlo otra vez, que harían diferente?

2. ¿El hecho de que su hijo es barón/mujer, afecto su reacción cuando se fue a vivir fuera de su casa?
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a. Cree que hubiera reaccionado diferente a su partida si su hija/o fuera del sexo opuesto?

3. ¿Cómo (de que manera) le proporcionaron apoyo ustedes y otros miembros de la familia a su hija/hijo cuando se mudaron de su casa y se fueron a la Universidad.

a. ¿Cuales miembros de la familia estuvieron involucrados en proveer apoyo a su hija/hijo?

b. ¿Cuando recuerda los familiares que ofrecieron apoyo a su hija/o, como lo consiguieron? De que manera apoyaron a su hija/o?

c. ¿Cual fue el tipo de apoyo que aportaron (en que consistía este apoyo)?

d. ¿Hay alguien mas que apoyo a su hija/o cuando se fue a estudiar a la Universidad?

4. Piense sobre el primer año que su hija/o estuvo en la Universidad y su contacto con ella/el. ¿Recuerda alguna situación en la cual ustedes hicieron algo para apoyar a su hija/hijo? ¿Que fue lo que hicieron para proporcionarle apoyo?

a. ¿Que fue lo que le hizo que usted sintió que le estaba proporcionando apoyo a su hija/o?

b. ¿Cómo se sintió con sus acciones de apoyo hacia su hija/o?

c. ¿Sintió que sus muestras de apoyo influyeron a su hija/o en la Universidad? De que manera cree que esto la/o influyo?

5. ¿Ahora que su hija/o esta en su ____ año en la Universidad, sigue usted y su familia proporcionando apoyo?

a. ¿Me puede dar un ejemplo reciente de como sigue proporcionando apoyo a su hija/o?

b. ¿Con el paso del tiempo, ha cambiado el apoyo que le da a su hija/o?

c. ¿Hay algo que usted deseaba haber hecho para demostrarle apoyo a su hija/o que no hizo o no pudo hacer? Por favor explique.

d. ¿Siente que ha cambiado las relacion con su hija/o ahora que estan en la Universidad?

6. ¿Que hacen ustedes estar para mantener el contacto con su hija/o cuando esta en la Universidad? (llamadas, skype, textos, visitas)
7. ¿Se sienten mas cerca/distanciados de su hija/o ahora que se fue a vivir a la Universidad?
   a. ¿Cómo han cambiado la relaciones con los hermanos/as de sus hija/o ahora que se fue a la Universidad? ________________________

8. ¿Le ha comentado algo su hija/o sobre como se siente en la Universidad? Que le cuenta?
   a. ¿Cree usted que se ha acoplado/incorporado/ajustado a la vida Universitaria?
   b. ¿En su opinión ha sido fácil o difícil para su hija/o acoplarse a la vida en la universidad?

9. ¿Que consejos le dio a su hija/o cuando se fue a la Universidad?

10. ¿Hay algo mas que quisiera agregar sobre el apoyo que le brindo a su hija/hijo cuando ella/el se fue a la Universidad o aserca de que su hija/o se fue a la Universidad?
    a. ¿Hay algo mas que quisiera agregar sobre lo que hemos platicado hoy?