THE EFFECTS OF THE CULTURAL CONCEPTS OF FAMILISMO
AND THE GOOD DAUGHTER DILEMMA ON THE
LATINA COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

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By
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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Signed Certification of Approval Page is
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband Michael, my son Andrew, my daughter Morgan, and my sister Yvonne for their ongoing love, support and encouragement.

This work is also dedicated to my special friend, Deborah Forester, whose ongoing reassurance and optimism gave me the fortitude to complete this labor of love.

This work is also dedicated to the memory of my father, Balthazar Rodriguez, who always stressed the importance of continuing my education.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the “good daughter dilemma” as they relate to the college experience of Latina students. This study included a discussion of the numerous challenges affecting Latina students that may limit their ability to graduate from college. The research questions that guided this study are as follows: 1) how do the cultural concepts of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma affect the college experience of a Latina college student, 2) what strategies are successful in resolving conflicts between family and college obligations, and 3) does awareness of these cultural concepts lead to more positive outcomes in the Latina college experience. The researcher selected six Latina students first in their family to attend college to be the sample for this study. The researcher collected data by interviewing the six students who self-identified with the cultural concepts of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma. The qualitative findings of this study indicated the six students received heavy opposition from their family to attend college. All six students practiced the strategies of negotiation and compromise that helped to resolve conflicts with family and college obligations. All six students shared that understanding the cultural concepts of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma helped to create a balance between their cultural expectations and the reality of attaining a college degree. Finally this researcher suggests that this study serve as a useful tool in designing programs in preparing middle school and high school Latinas for higher education.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

An American ideal which is considered the key to success is to attend an institution of higher learning and earn a degree. A college degree offers privileges and opportunities. There is the potential for upward economic mobility, notability, and prestige after earning a degree. The college degree continues to be sought after in ever increasing numbers across every demographic. The number of degrees conferred to U.S. residents by degree granting institutions for the academic year 2009–10 is as follows: associate’s degrees, 833,337; bachelor’s degrees, 1,602,480; master’s degrees, 611,693, and doctorates, 140,505 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Although higher education degree opportunities seem plentiful, the American ideal to access and attend institutions of higher learning was not always as easily available as it is today.

Early America was comprised of colonies of the British Empire; therefore, early American institutions of higher learning were closely modeled on the English system. In 1636, Harvard University opened as the first institution of higher education in America. The original goal at Harvard University was to train members of clergy as well as to prepare men of refinement and culture for positions of responsibilities and leadership in society.

Access to these early institutions was generally only for white males from families of wealth. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution forged the
democratic principle of inclusiveness, which became the driving force behind educational access. State governments responded to the need to have an educated citizenry by encouraging the growth of educational institutions (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007).

Through the passage of the Morrill Acts in 1862, Congress established land grant institutions, which then served to greatly expand access to higher education in America. The Morrill Acts provided an avenue for states to create new colleges and universities. These educational initiatives benefited not only public colleges, but also helped private institutes of higher learning. The passage of this landmark legislation made the United States the first nation in the world to commit national resources toward higher education (Hyman, 1986).

Higher education was viewed as the vehicle that the members of the lower socioeconomic classes could utilize to facilitate upward mobility (Herren & Edwards, 2002). Although women were not specifically mentioned in the Morrill Acts of 1862, this legislation expanded educational access to women beyond the small, private all women’s colleges, which was the norm during that time period. The Morrill Acts of 1862 impelled coordination and entrepreneurship that were essential for the formation of research universities and laid the foundation for rapid growth of American higher education.

Postwar prosperity after World War I and a fresh perspective on higher education caused college attendance to increase. Unfortunately, the demographics for higher education remained largely unchanged. Despite the establishment of colleges
for women and minorities, higher education remained largely the domain of the upper class white male.

A major expansion in college enrollments occurred following World War II with the establishment of the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act, or G.I. Bill. This legislation provided opportunities for individuals who served in the military to pursue education through federally-funded programs. The G.I. Bill provided access to higher education to millions of individuals who never considered attending school or could not afford the expense of school without assistance. Societal changes, the move toward greater urbanization, and new economic opportunities that resulted in the change from rural to city living drove those returning from World War II to pursue a higher education (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 set forth that any institution receiving federal funds through a government grant or contract must not practice discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin. The Civil Rights Act mandated that all colleges and universities establish affirmative action programs removing racial discrimination from admissions, financial aid, and hiring practices. These affirmative action practices are generally credited with having had a positive impact on the ability of minority students to access higher education (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007).

Due to the success of federal programs, such as the G.I. Bill, federal efforts to enhance access to higher education were then expanded to include subsidized student loans, work study, and scholarship programs. Federal financial aid programs now provide students affordability and access to college by means of low interest student
loans. Financial aid programs have drastically improved access to higher education for low-income students.

During the 1970s, access to higher education was expanded through the implementation, creation, and building of two-year and community colleges. The community college offers affordable tuition rates, flexible class schedules, and meets the needs of nontraditional degree seeking students. Community colleges offer two-year associate’s degrees. They also offer transfer opportunities to students seeking enrollment to a four-year college or university. Community colleges provide access to higher education for those who may not fit into the traditional college student demographic.

**Statement of the Problem**

Latina college students, who come from families of low socioeconomic status, often make complex decisions regarding their postsecondary education. They often have to balance cultural demands along with the reality of attaining a higher education. Latinas as an ethnic group have specific challenges, obstacles, and cultural expectations.

Phinney, Dennis and Gutierrez (2005) indicated that Latina college students face numerous challenges that limit their ability to complete college. One notable barrier is the challenge of being first generation students to attend college. Their families have little or no experience with higher education and consequently are less able to provide information, support, and advice.
Another obstacle for a Latina is the financial burden of attending college. Parents of Latina college students often have limited capital available to support their children’s college pursuits. The financial burden then falls to the individual Latina who may end up holding a full-time or part-time job while attending school to meet her financial needs. Balancing the competing demands of job and school work is one reason that Latina college students often terminate their educational pursuits (Castillo & Hill, 2004).

Culturally, Latina college students face multiple expectations, responsibilities, and obligations to their family. These family obligations may conflict with school responsibilities, therefore placing a Latina in a cultural bind. Latin culture places a high value on family interdependence. Traditionally, the female has the role of the good daughter because she is expected to prioritize family needs over her own. This role of good daughter may cause conflict and can increase stress during college years (Espinoza, 2010). This kind of cultural strife may decrease academic performance since students experience competing demands (Sy & Romero, 2008).

The “good daughter dilemma” that Latinas often confront while pursuing higher education requires a discussion of the cultural value known as familismo. 

Familismo is a Hispanic cultural construct that emphasizes cooperation and interdependency within a multi-generational family unit. Familismo is also a strong identification and attachment to family that is both nuclear and extended. Familismo requires its members to prioritize family interests over an individual’s personal interests (Espinoza, 2010).
Latinas who are inculcated with a strong sense of *familismo* have a cultural template of expectations and family obligations. These expectations may include language/cultural brokering, sibling caretaking, and making financial contributions to the family unit. There is also an expected obligation to spend time with family and reside close to home (Cavazos et al., 2010).

The researcher is a Latina woman who works with at-risk youth. One facet of her job is to advise young Latina women about pursuing higher education. From personal college experience, this researcher is aware that there are cultural expectations that can impede success in school. Latina participants in the program administered by this writer tend to have good daughter dilemma and *familismo*-type cultural conflict. This study will examine the pertinent body of literature on the good daughter phenomenon and the cultural concept of *familismo*. In conjunction with these two concepts, interviews will be conducted with Latina students who are in enrolled in their junior or senior year of college who self-identify with the concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma.

Awareness about cultural assumptions is important. Furthermore, awareness of the Latina cultural dynamics can lead to positive outcomes. People who understand their culture can strike a better balance in their lives. This kind of cultural understanding can lead to more self-confidence, self-esteem, and conflict resolution. Ultimately, cultural understanding can assist Latinas to succeed in school.
**Significance of the Study**

The results of this study will serve as a useful tool for both high school and college educators who make decisions regarding program design and services for young Latina women who are pursuing higher education.

**Research Questions**

1. How do the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma affect the college experience of Latina women?

2. What strategies are successful in resolving conflicts between family and college obligations?

3. How does a Latina student’s awareness of the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma lead to more positive outcomes in her college experience?

**Interview Questions**

1. Describe your knowledge of the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma.

2. Describe a *familismo* type dilemma that placed you in a bind between fulfilling a family obligation and a school obligation. Explain how you were able to resolve this dilemma.

3. What practices or strategies do you believe are most effective in resolving a conflict between family and school obligations?

4. What practices or strategies do you believe are least successful in resolving a conflict between family and school obligations?
5. Describe circumstances when you shared and gave advice to friends regarding conflicts that have occurred under *familismo* type conditions.

6. What do you believe are the benefits and advantages of living under the cultural concepts of *familismo*?

7. Describe a major event involving the cultural concept of *familismo* that shaped your life?

8. How will you apply the cultural concept of *familismo* in raising your daughters?

9. What other types of cultural dilemmas have you encountered while attending college?

**Operational Definitions**

The following terms are defined in order to assist the reader in understanding the references made in this study:

*Latina:* A woman who is living in the United States and whose cultural and ethnic heritage originated from varying mixtures of Spanish, indigenous, and African culture in the South West United States, Mexico, Caribbean, Central and South America.

*Familismo:* A strong cultural orientation of interdependency among family members, both nuclear and extended.

*Good daughter:* A role that a Latina daughter accepts when practicing *familismo*, in which needs of the family take priority above the needs of the individual.

*Biculturalism:* The ability to be competent in two cultures. An individual who engages in typical behaviors of both cultures, embraces the opportunity to remain
involved in practices and lifestyles of both cultures, and feels a sense of belonging to both cultural communities.

*Borderlands theory:* a theoretical framework that offers ways to acknowledge and name the strategies of resistance that Latinas learn in their homes and live out during their educational journeys.

*Mestiza identity:* A Latina consciousness that straddles cultures, races, languages, nations, and spiritualities-living with ambivalence while balancing opposing powers.

*Marianismo identity:* A woman who prescribe to dependence, subordination, responsibility and selfless devotion to family.

**Summary**

In Chapter I, this researcher provided background information on the historical accessibility to higher education for students in America. In the early years, college was only afforded to upper-class white males and clergymen. The demographics of college attendance changed with the onset of federally funded programs, financial aid, and affirmative action. The increase in college attendance of woman and minorities has produced its own set of problems. This researcher identified specific cultural challenges faced by Latina college students and provided guided interview questions that address cultural demands along with the reality of attaining a higher education.

In Chapter II, this researcher will review the literature related to the topic of this study. Chapter III focuses on the methodology of this study. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the qualitative data collected through student interviews and analytical
results. Chapter V will present this researcher’s conclusions based on the analysis of the collected data.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Gloria, Castellanos, and Orozco (2005) reported that Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. Self-identified Hispanics are 16.9% of the U.S. population. In the Western United States, Hispanics account for 29% of the total population (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, & Albert, 2010). With 50,477,594 million members, Hispanics are presently the fastest-growing group in the United States (Ennis, et al., 2010). While Latinos clearly constitute a vital portion of the U.S. population, they continue to face barriers in the pursuit of postsecondary education.

According to Gloria et al. (2005), Hispanics are underrepresented in the institutions of higher education and have the lowest degree completion rates when compared to other ethnicities. Latinos of Mexican descent lag far behind Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and South Americans in college degree attainment. In the year 2009–2010, 8.8% of total bachelor degrees were earned by Hispanics, in contrast to 72.9% earned by Anglo-White and 10.3% earned by African Americans (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

Phinney et al. (2005) found that Latina college students face numerous challenges that limit their chances of completing college and earning a degree. Latina students face not only socioeconomic limitations, but also usually are first-generation college students (Phinney et al., 2005). Latina parents have significantly
lower incomes, and therefore, Latina students have a greater financial need that suggests financial limitations are one reason they discontinue their college endeavors.

The latest U.S. Census noted that 25.3% of Hispanics live in poverty and 30.1% do not have health insurance coverage. Studies show that low income can contribute to higher levels of psychological stressors among Latino students. Many Latino students have to hold a part-time or full-time job; balancing work and school demands. Since finances are of great concern, Latino college students, who work 20 or more hours per week in high school, continue to feel the need to work through college (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007). Regretfully, the need to work can act as an environmental pull factor, drawing students away from certain aspects of the college experience (Reyes & Nora, 2012).

In addition, Latino college students often straddle two cultures. In most cultures, men and women have different roles. The Latino culture is no different. Latinas have a traditional stereo-typical gender role that emphasizes helping at home, spending time with family and language translation (Sy, 2006). The academically successful college student and nurturing family caregiver often have divergent roles. The Latina college students have to negotiate between gender role performance and the individualistic pursuit of a college education. Differences between Latino cultural expectations and the mainstream pursuit of higher education and its demands can be an emotional strain and create family discord (Cano & Castillo, 2010).
The Latina college student is deeply intertwined between two cultures. At school, there is the individualistic goal seeking college culture and at home is the Latino communal collective approach to family. This dualistic home/school dilemma is complicated, since deep familial bonds can provide a sense of emotional well-being and connectedness (Espinoza, 2010). Sy (2006) noted that strong family ties serve as a protective factor for female adolescents who are navigating transition to college.

**Theoretical Framework**

Biculturalism is defined as an integration of the competencies and sensitivities associated with two cultures within a person. Biculturalism is best represented as an optimum cultural adaptation strategy for Latinos and other nonwestern immigrant groups who must respond to often competing demands on a daily basis (Buriel, Perez, DeMent, Chavez, & Moran, 1998). The biculturalism theory explains how Latinas manage the conflicts and tensions that arise between two different cultures. According to Espinoza (2010), a bicultural person is competent in two cultures, embraces the opportunity to remain involved in practices and lifestyles of both cultures, and feels a sense of belonging to both cultural communities. Although the biculturalism framework can explain how Latinas negotiate the macro structure of the culture, a Chicana feminist theory explains the daily social ethnic identity management from a micro perspective (Espinoza, 2010).

In her theoretically groundbreaking book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) proposed the *mestiza* identity, a third hybrid identity that develops from the process of constantly straddling two
cultures in everyday life: “The new mestiza copes by developing tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity… she learns to juggle cultures” (p. 101).

According to Anzaldúa (1987), the mestiza identity, which can take on many unique forms, developed to manage two cultures that are always in direct conflict with one another. The term mestiza has come to mean living with ambivalence while balancing opposing powers (Bernal, 2001).

Anzaldúa (1987) described the conflict and tension generated by the polarities experienced when one is torn between the needs of the home and the demands within educational institutions; the dual nature of identity in the border culture means learning two ways of thinking, speaking, and sometimes two distinct languages. The mestiza identity is characterized by a resiliency that allows the Latina to shift in and out of habitual formations and movement from a single goal to divergent thinking (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Anzaldúa’s borderlands theory helps us to understand the experience of women who are exposed to contradictory social systems. A Latina’s reality is that she lives in multiple social worlds and therefore must develop the ability to navigate oppressions and circumstances that are not static in nature. Anzaldúa’s insights help others to understand and theorize the experiences of individuals who are exposed to contradictory social systems and develop what Anzaldúa termed as la facultad (ability or gift). It is the notion that women who are exposed to multiple social worlds, as defined by culture, languages, social classes, sexualities, nation states and colonization, develop the agility to navigate and challenge monoculture and monolingual conceptions of social reality. Within Borderlands Theory,
oppressions are not ranked nor are they conceptualized as static; rather they are recognized as fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on the context. (Cantu & Hurtado, 2012, p. 7)

According to Anzaldúa (1987), developing the mestiza consciousness allows a Latina to navigate these different social contexts and maintain knowledge of what it means to reside in their different and social political interstices. Through borderlands theory, Anzaldúa provided the framework to address how women may survive carrying the burden of their social and political stigma when they have no control over how others categorize them into social groups. Furthermore, Anzaldúa helps us to understand how Latinas can cope with the chasm between their private self-perception (as competent, intelligent, logical individuals) and society’s negative perceptions of them (Cantu & Hurtado, 2012).

Informed by biculturalism, the mestiza identity framework helps to clarify the borders that the Latina college students are forced to deal with on a daily basis, constantly shifting in and out of different social contexts with diverse gender expectations to which they adjust. More specifically, Bernal (2001) drew on the concept of a mestiza consciousness as the way a Latina college student navigates, balances, and negotiates around her family responsibilities and college obligations.

**Family Influences**

Familismo, a cultural concept emphasizing closeness and loyalty, has been identified as a valued characteristic of many Latino populations (Vega, 1990). Familismo includes strong identification and attachment to family, both nuclear and extended, and requires members to prioritize the needs of the family first, even at the
cost of great personal sacrifices. In contrast to the values of individuality and independence emphasized in dominant U.S. culture, *familismo* emphasizes cooperation and interdependence (Espinoza, 2010).

*Familismo* takes place in family relationships. Blood relatedness is a relative state of being since nonfamily members are often included in its practice. *Familismo* is also related to the ideas of co-parentage, community formation, and the idea that “it takes a village” to raise a child. It includes the responsibility of each individual to cultivate a system of interpersonal connections within that individual’s neighborhood (Gloria et al., 2005).

*Familismo* places the priorities on a family’s needs above those of an individual. Expectations and responsibilities for each Latina family member can include caretaking, cultural/language brokering, and financial contributions. There is also an expectation that Latina women spend a significant amount of their free time with family and stay close to home. Studies that examine *familismo* indicate that domestic caretaking responsibilities inherent to family life are more likely to fall on the women rather than the men (Espinoza, 2010). Cavazos et al. (2010) stated there is also a practice of prohibiting Latina students from leaving home to attend college that is geographically distant from the family.

Espinoza (2010) identified Latinas with a strong sense of *familismo* have a schema of obligations and reciprocities that is important to fulfill in their youth and adult lives. These obligations hold special significance for daughters who come from a strong orientation of *familismo*. The emphasis of personal sacrifice epitomizes the
females’ role as family caretaker and further reinforces for daughters the cultural value of *marianismo* (Sy, 2006). *Marianismo*, for example, is modeled from the Catholic Virgin Madonna, which prescribes dependence, subordination, responsibility, and selfless devotion to family. It is not uncommon for daughters of Latino families to take on the surrogate parent role while growing up, therefore creating an expectation that a good daughter will always prioritize the family needs above her personal wants and desires (Espinoza, 2010).

Good daughters are expected to prioritize family needs above their individual needs. Therefore, Latinas with a strong sense of *familismo* who pursue higher education find themselves with a set of competing obligations to school and to family. Research indicates that Latino parents who highly value education for their children still expect their daughters to continue to fulfill family obligations (Sy & Romero, 2008). As a result, Latinas find themselves caught up in the good daughter dilemma of meeting both the demands of their individualistic-oriented school experience and their collectivist-oriented family culture.

Sy and Romero (2008) suggested that family obligations that tie ethnic minority youths to their families may present a double edge sword. Despite the potentially conflicting demands from school and home, the connection to family serves as a protective factor to help students maintain focus on their academics. Espinoza (2010) showed that Latinas with a strong sense of *familismo* in their connections to family gives them a sense of belonging and emotional well-being.
However, Latinas with a high collectivist orientation often find the individualistic culture of school alienating, which prompts them to maintain strong ties to family.

Parental encouragement of Latinas is different from social supports practiced by white middle class families. In spite of low socioeconomic and educational status, Latina parents find different ways of conveying the importance of a college education. Despite their own limited educational and economic status, Latina parents provide positive encouragement for their children to succeed in school. For example, Latino parents tell family stories that outline in a nonspecific way the importance of college education (Ceja, 2004). Phinney et al. (2005) found that for some Latinas, one of their strongest reasons to attend college was to help their family financially by earning a degree to be in line for better paying jobs.

Yamamura, Martinez, and Saenz (2010) conducted a study with focus groups that were purposefully arranged among multiple stakeholders, i.e., teachers, parents, counselors, students and superintendents. This division was made to ascertain the role of each group in preparing students for college. The study showed that parental stakeholders illustrated college preparedness to their children by imparting familial and aspirational capital. Familial and aspirational capital is not necessarily monetary support. Instead it is less tangible and more along the lines of moral support.

Studies also indicated that mother–daughter relationships can have a positive effect on Latina girls and schooling. Their mothers had a direct influence on the degree to which their daughters liked school. Kaplan, Turner, and Badger (2007) found that Hispanic girls who felt that their mothers were involved, respectful,
understanding, and responsive to them in the family setting impacted them in a positive way. These girls were more likely to appreciate school because of their relationship with their mother. This ongoing relationship between mothers and daughters illustrates what scholars call *mutuality*. Mothers who were involved in a positive way with their daughters created a symbiotic, mutual relationship that has been demonstrated to have a good effect on their daughters and their attitude toward school.

*Kaplan et al.* (2007) stated that mutuality in close relationships can foster emotional resilience, increase positive coping mechanisms, and provide genuine feelings of support. Studies indicate that a close, warm, and supportive relationship between a Latina mother and her daughter strongly correlates with more adaptive school functioning and better school performance (*Kaplan et al.*, 2007).

Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, and Talbot (2000) concluded that the foremost contributing factor for success in Latinas is the role that a mother plays in encouraging and supporting their daughters’ educational goals. A mother’s positive influence has been found to mediate the negative effects of low socioeconomic status and contribute to the academic achievement of her daughter.

Studies show that Latinas who spend more time with their families usually report lower stress. They also tend to have higher academic achievement levels. However, *Sy and Romero* (2008) identified a distinction between different types of family obligations and stress levels. It is important to note that Latinas who spend a significant portion of their time with their families providing translating services and
caring for younger siblings experience increased levels of stress when they are attending college (Sy, 2006). Frequently, stress resulting from family expectations to fulfill specific responsibilities is compounded by the parent’s lack of understanding of what it takes to be successful in college. In turn, the mother’s lack of understanding and expectations for her daughter contribute to the role of caretaker. One young woman explained the stress in the following way:

My mom has a hard time, because she doesn’t see school as important. She likes me to get As, go to school, do your BA, but she wants to have like, like a miracle or something. ’Cause I’m like my mom, it takes studying, reading and homework … I’m like, it’s just not gonna happen, I need to do it … she wants me to get As. She’s so happy, right now, but she wants me to do all the other stuff … so she doesn’t get it. (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 220)

Moreover, the Latina college student can also experience more negative stressors from acting as language/cultural brokers for their families than when they are just “hanging out” with family members (Sy, 2006). It is not entirely clear why language brokering serves as a risk factor for negative outcomes, whereas spending time with family serves as a protective factor. One distinction is that Latinas may perceive spending time with family as a more flexible obligation than language brokering. It is unlikely that language brokering is something an individual can choose to do on his or her own time without being requested to do so. It is a demand that necessitates a specific request from a parent and often may require the daughter to meet at a particular time and location (Buriel et al., 1998). Researchers have concluded that these close family and ethnic ties can have both positive and negative outcomes on academic achievement (Phinney et al., 2005).
In recent years, Latina adolescents are increasingly drawn to higher education. Sy (2006) confirmed that overall college enrollment for Latina high school graduates is similar to enrollment for females from other ethnic groups. Unfortunately, Latinas are the least likely to enroll in four-year colleges immediately after high school graduation and are the least likely to earn college degrees. Studies show that Latinas live in a liminal cultural space and are impacted by strong cultural and social structures. Latinas who are raised with a strong *familismo* cultural orientation may encounter the good daughter dilemma while at the same time aspire to academic success. In their pursuit of higher education, Latina college students may experience the pressure to fulfill multiple and often competing roles. To effectively navigate through these two social spheres of school and family, she can draw on the *mestiza* identity and her bicultural orientation to employ strategies to assist her in overcoming these cultural binds. Chapter 3 will present the methodology of this study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma to determine how both cultural concepts may affect the college experience of Latina students. This chapter addresses the sample population, data collection, and data analysis used to conduct this study.

Sample Population

This study is limited to six Latina college students attending the University of California, Merced (UC Merced) in Merced, California. The students interviewed were enrolled in their junior or senior year of college, and their ages ranged from 19 to 22 years old. The participants interviewed were first or second generation in their families to attend college. Most participants are single, attending college full time and employed part-time. All participants self-identified as growing up in families with strong *familismo* orientations and affected by the good daughter dilemma.

Data Collection Process

Case study methodology was used to gain a deeper understanding of the answers to the research questions. In this study, individual one-on-one interviews were conducted in May 2013 and used as the primary tool for data collection. All interviews were recorded with permission of the parties. Journal notes were taken at the time of the initial interview and reviewed upon completion. UC Merced student
clubs provided the names and phone numbers to this researcher so interested participants could be contacted at a later date.

Upon receiving approval from the California State University, Stanislaus Institutional Review Board to conduct field research, the interested participants were contacted by the researcher and informed of the nature and purpose of this study. After selecting six prospective participants, a letter describing the study and an Informed Consent form were mailed to each. Upon receiving written consent, this researcher scheduled times and appropriate locations to conduct and record the interviews. Participants were given the questions at least one week prior to the interview for the purpose of providing trustworthy responses. Each interview averaged 30-40 minutes and was audio-recorded and fully transcribed. To protect the identity of the participants, all interview tapes were coded numerically and assigned with a pseudonym. Prior to the interviews, the participants were informed that the transcripts from the interviews would be destroyed upon completion of this study.

**Research Question Matrix**

1. How do these cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma affect the college experience of Latina women?

2. What strategies are successful in resolving conflicts between family and college obligations?

3. How does a Latina student’s awareness of the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma lead to more positive outcomes in her college experience?
Table 1

*Interview Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Describe your knowledge of the cultural concepts of <em>familismo</em> and the</td>
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<td>“good daughter dilemma”.</td>
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<td>2) Describe a <em>familismo</em> type dilemma that placed you in a bind between</td>
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<td>fulfilling a family obligation and a school obligation. Explain how you have</td>
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<td>were able to resolve this dilemma.</td>
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<td>3) What practices or strategies do you believe are most effective in</td>
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<td>resolving a conflict between family and school obligations?</td>
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<td>4) What practices or strategies do you believe are least successful in</td>
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<td>resolving a conflict between family and school obligations?</td>
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<td>5) Describe circumstances when you shared and gave advice to friends regarding</td>
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<td>conflicts that occurred under <em>familismo</em> type conditions.</td>
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<td>6) What do you believe are the benefits and advantages of living under the</td>
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<td>cultural concept of <em>familismo</em>?</td>
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<td>7) Describe a major event involving the cultural concept of <em>familismo</em> that</td>
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<td>shaped your life?</td>
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<td>8) How will you apply the cultural concept of <em>familismo</em> in raising your</td>
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<td>daughters?</td>
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<td>9) What other types of cultural dilemmas have you encountered while attending</td>
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<td>college?</td>
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Data Analysis

Each recorded interview was transcribed immediately upon completion. This researcher determined the accuracy of the interviewees’ responses by (1) emailing copies of the transcripts to the interviewee, (2) asking the interviewee to review the transcripts noting accuracy and intent of the statements, and (3) requesting the transcripts to be returned to this researcher within 48 hours.

A careful systematic analysis of the transcribed interviews was conducted by the researcher for validity. Triangulation of the research data was achieved by the review of the relevant literature, interviews with the participants, and observations made during the interviews.

In order to better organize the data, the transcripts were color-coded based on the categories defined in the research question: R1 = identification of the effects of familismo and the good daughter dilemma on the college experience of Latina students, R2 = identification of successful strategies, R3 = cultural awareness leads to positive outcomes. Each category was separated into subcategories using the response matrix in order to identify, compare, and contrast the common patterns and themes.

Summary

Chapter III described the research methodology utilized for this study. This researcher collected data from the interviews of six Latina college students who self-identified with the cultural concepts familismo and/or good daughter dilemma. This chapter included an overview of the research design and procedures which included the sample population, data collection, data analysis and summary. Chapter IV will
address the key ideas discovered through the participant interviews and final results from the data analysis.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma on the Latina college experience. To that end, this researcher interviewed six UC Merced Latina juniors and seniors who self-identified with the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma to provide feedback on how these cultural concepts affect their college experience. This chapter provides a summary of the interviews as they relate to each research question.

Interviews

Interview 1

At the time of the interview, Bridgett, from Los Angeles, was a 21-year-old senior, the eldest of four siblings and the first in her family to attend college. She was a full-time student who worked 10-15 hours per week as a high school tutor. Although Bridgett reported not finding time to volunteer, she was able to attend church and social events in the community. Bridgett planned to continue her studies by earning a master’s degree in social work.

**Identification of how these cultural concepts affected the college experience of the Latina student (R1).** Bridgett noted that the dilemma that placed her in a cultural bind between fulfilling a family and a school obligation was due to
her father’s not wanting her to attend UC Merced because she would be living far from home. Bridgett’s father presumed that after high school Bridgett would stay at home to help with household chores and the family business. There were many hours of discussion and negotiation until her father finally allowed Bridgett to attend UC Merced. At the same time, throughout her college years, Bridgett’s father kept pressuring her to finish her studies in Los Angeles. Bridgett remained determined and did not give into her father’s wishes. As time passed, Bridgett believed her father started getting used to the idea of her attending UC Merced. Today, Bridgett’s father is very proud of her. Bridgett will finish her studies at UC Merced and be the first college graduate in her family.

**Identification of successful strategies (R2).** The strategy that Bridgett believed to work best for her was compromise. Bridgett faced adversity when she wanted to attend UC Merced. Bridgett stated, “I think that it was a huge thing for my father, letting go of Mexican traditions.” She had to prove to her father that she was going to be an independent woman by going away to college while abiding by the family traditions:

> I promised my parents that I would be home for all the major holidays and weekends. Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, birthdays, of course Christmas; it was all about compromising with them. Every night at 10:00 pm, I had to call, text or SKYPE my family, every single night!

Bridgett decided that it was important to obey the requests of her parents, since they would give their ongoing support.

Bridgett affirmed that arguing with her parents was never a successful strategy. She expressed it pointedly by saying, “I understand my family is about
union, being a unit, being close-knit, and I realize that my family really misses me.”

Therefore, Bridgett reasoned with her parents and promised them that she would return home in four years. Bridgett was very positive and optimistic. Her parents’ largest concern was that she might find a job in another area and not return home. Bridgett found it beneficial to remain positive and reassure her parents that she would be home after the UC Merced graduation.

Bridgett acknowledged that other Latina students experienced adversity with their parents and family members regarding college and living away from home. She felt that the best advice she could give to her friends was the following:

You have to compromise. Make it work between your parents and other family members. Keep traditions, like the role that you have at home; keep them, even when you are four hours away. Whenever you can, do what your parents ask; just do it. A Mexican daughter leaving home is a drastic change to her parents.

Bridgett felt confident giving this advice to her friends because this was a successful strategy she used with her family.

**Identification of the cultural awareness that lead to positive outcomes in the Latina college experience (R3).** Bridgett strongly identified with the good daughter dilemma and shared her views by affirming,

A good daughter is not really allowed to leave the home, especially before marriage, or pursue her education in a postsecondary setting. Her role is stay home to clean and take care of children and do all the things that are embedded in the definition of a good daughter.

Bridgett plans to keep the cultural concept of *familismo* in raising her daughters. She feels that raising her girls with a sense of tradition will inculcate pride in their
heritage. She will not make them stay home or do the duties that they have to do only because they are Latina. But whatever they want to do, she will support them.

She effectively expressed this notion by stating,

I want to instill the love of the culture in my daughters; learning to cook that meal that has that old Mexican soul, listening to Mexican music and speaking Spanish. Definitely instilling that love of the culture and knowing that they can do whatever they want to do in life, because it is their life.

Understanding the cultural concepts of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma gave Bridgett insights to help her parents better understand the importance of attending UC Merced. She reported that her parents were strong traditionalists who believed Hispanic girls had a place in the home and did not leave home before marriage. She established that the path of compromise and avoiding arguing with her parents was a better strategy if they were to let her leave home at such a young age. Bridgett also agreed that staying close to her family, talking to them daily, and seeing them on most weekends provided her with strong family support that enabled her to focus on her studies and led to more positive outcomes for her college experience.

In summary, Bridgett strongly believed that staying close to her Mexican traditions and heritage was a form of protection that helped her to stay focused while attending UC Merced. Bridgett reported being very proud of her Mexican heritage and traditions and concluded by stating,

I am a Latina woman and Mexican American. It’s something I can pass on to my children. I love the fact that I can speak Spanish fluently. I am Mexican, I’m graduating and I am going to participate in the Chicano Latina Commencement. I’m going to wear my serape very proudly. Yes, I went to school, but I can cook a meal, clean a house, and I can maintain a
household. I’m a working woman; I am graduating, earning a Bachelor of Arts and next I plan to earn a master’s degree.

Interview 2

At the time of the interview, Pam, the first in her family to attend college, was a 21-year-old senior taking 18 units of coursework. She worked 10–15 hours per week in a high school tutoring program. She also volunteered more than 25 hours a week at school and in the community. Pam’s major was psychology; she planned to earn her master’s degree in social work at University of California, Los Angeles. Pam reported her love of travel and exploration of new cultures.

Identification of how these cultural concepts affected the college experience of the Latina student (R1). Pam defined the cultural concepts of *familismo* as a family that shares the same values, the same beliefs, and the same culture. Pam’s definition of the good daughter dilemma is a daughter who is not supposed to have sex before marriage nor allowed to date before she leaves home for college. In her own words, Pam expressed, “A good daughter needs to be really involved with religious things and needs to be the role model for all the girls in the family.” Pam, the older of two siblings, reported that the cultural beliefs and household obligations placed a huge burden on her. Her parents also pressured her to work outside the home to help with the family finances; even at a young age, Pam and her brother accompanied their parents to work. Pam reported not wanting to be bound to the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma.

Identification of successful strategies (R2). Pam experienced conflict with her parents regarding her cultural responsibilities that made it difficult to attend UC
Merced. She eventually helped her parents to understand that school was her priority and that it was her ticket out of poverty. She was also very frank and honest when giving advice to her friends regarding the importance of attending school. Pam noted the importance of sharing the language and the culture with her children, but did not want to impose the cultural beliefs and obligations that her parents placed on her.

About her first year at UC Merced, Pam shared, “I wasn’t depressed but excited to get out of the old neighborhood to have a chance to meet new people.” She was looking forward to sharing different cultures and ideas with her parents. It was important for her to disengage from these cultural concepts and experience success in college.

Identification of cultural awareness that lead to positive outcomes (R3). Pam grew up with the traditional beliefs of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma. She met many Hispanic students at UC Merced who had kept their traditions, but as Pam stated, “This [was] not my thing anymore.” Pam shared that she did not join a Hispanic club because she wanted to learn about other cultures and people. Pam expressed, “I like to experience new things, and to learn more about other cultures. I didn’t really know about the Hmong culture because back in the old neighborhood, we didn’t have such diversity. Wow! I love learning about other cultures.”

In summary, Pam was raised with strong Hispanic cultural beliefs and obligations. Pam reported she understood and accepted her heritage, but she did not feel bound to them. She intended to travel and learn about other cultures and people.
Interview 3

At the time of interview, Maria, the first in her family to attend college, was a 21-year-old junior taking 16 units of coursework. Maria worked in a high school tutoring program 10-15 hours per week and found time to volunteer in the community. Maria’s major was psychology with a minor in Spanish. Maria loved her job as a high school tutor. Maria noted that when she completed her education, she planned to pursue a career in teaching. She expressed a wish to change students’ lives by encouraging them to pursue their education. Maria reported her love of music and enjoyment of cooking.

Identification of how these cultural concepts affected the college experience of the Latina student (R1). Maria reported having experienced adversity when she was making plans to attend UC Merced. Maria expounded by saying, “My parents think that education is important, but they wanted me to attend a school close to home.” Maria had her own dreams, aspirations, and goals, and wanted to take advantage of every available opportunity. Maria’s parents were not supportive in her college choices. Maria’s father said that he would not financially help with college expenses if she did not stay close to home. Maria did not waver from her decision to attend a university; this was her opportunity to get an education, and she wanted to take it. She told her dad, “If you don’t want to help me, I’ll do it myself.” Originally, Maria was planning to attend UC Davis but decided to attend UC Merced since sufficient financial aid was available, and UC Merced was closer to home. It took some time for Maria’s father to get used to the idea that she was going away to
school, but it was at her high school graduation that her father had a change of heart. He was very proud of Maria, and told her, “I don’t care where you attend school; I will support you.”

Maria reported being excited to attend UC Merced with her family’s support. Maria agreed that the cultural concept of *familismo* was an advantage while attending school. She felt deeply connected to each member of her family and that they were there to support her emotionally and financially. In closing, Maria shared how important it was for a family to remain close and how pleased she was that the family now supported her dreams and goals.

**Identifications of successful strategies (R2).** The strategy that worked best for Maria was keeping communication open with her family and to avoid arguing. It was important for her to communicate with her parents, to let them know what she wanted or needed so they could support her in the best way they can. Many of Maria’s friends were affected by the good daughter dilemma and pressured to stay home. A close friend had been planning to attend UC Merced, but her parents were very strict and did not allow her to go. Maria became disappointed and tried to encourage her friend to follow her dreams and consider what was best for her and not her parents. Maria told the friend that she would support her, but her friend said, “No, I’m going to stay here and go to the community college.” Maria later learned that her friend dropped out of college because her parents bought a new home and they wanted financial support to help pay for living expenses.
Identification of cultural awareness that lead to positive outcomes (R3).

Maria defined the concept of *familismo* as being together and part of supporting each other as a family. When there was a problem, the family could resolve it together. Maria shared how the good daughter dilemma affected her while growing up. She stated, “I am a female, the youngest one in the family and I was expected to follow my parents’ rules to go to school and come back home.” She saw other students in afterschool programs or other activities and wanted to participate. Her parents were not so accepting of the idea because she was a girl, and they felt it was not a good idea for her to be alone in afterschool activities or other events away from home. It was difficult, but Maria—being a good daughter—obeys and followed her parents’ rules. As Maria grew up, Maria’s parents found her trustworthy, so she was given more freedoms.

In summary, Maria felt strongly attached to the cultural concepts of *familismo* and planned to raise her daughters under this cultural concept. She stated, “*Familismo* provides an advantage that allows everyone to be connected to each member of the family and I think it is something nice especially when the family is there to help each other.” Maria reported that having family support in understanding her goals and dreams certainly contributed to the positive outcomes of her college experience.

**Interview 4**

At the time of the interview, Gloria A. was a 21-year-old junior and first in her family to attend college. Gloria, a full-time student, worked 20 hours per week
outside of school. Gloria’s major was psychology; she planned to attend graduate school to become a marriage family child therapist. Gloria’s hobbies were spending time with friends and loved ones.

**Identification of how these cultural concepts affected the college experience of the Latina student (R1).** Gloria described *familismo* in this manner:

It is a big family, big support and big experience. My family it is big and I have learned a lot of things from them. For me, that is *familismo*; everyone has each other’s back. Everyone supports each other, people you trust, and someone who is always there for you.

Gloria defined the cultural concept of the good daughter dilemma accordingly:

It means that a daughter would have to be that role model for the family. The good daughter is like you have to be this, you have to be that. And in *familismo*, it would be more like that we will support you in whatever you decide, or whatever you choose, or whatever path you choose to take, and as in like the good daughter you have to do certain things for the family to get what you want.

Gloria believed that a good daughter maintains strong family ties, resulting in positive outcomes for her college experience.

**Identification of successful strategies (R2).** Gloria reported that not arguing was an effective strategy in resolving conflicts with her family. She shared an example about the importance of observing her mother’s wishes:

I feel that my mom wants to hold me to the good daughter thing. Like she says that I have to call her every day; well if I do not call her right now she feels I am not minding her. I remember in my freshman year, I had to call her every day, every day, and if I could, twice a day. This continued into my sophomore year; first semester, it was the same thing. Finally I told my mother that I can’t; I can’t call her every day; even if I wanted to call her.

Gloria continued by stating, “Even if I did not agree with my mother, it only would take five minutes to call her, so I would just do it!” Gloria noted that remaining a
good daughter allowed her to keep peace with her mother; she remained in good favor with the entire family.

Gloria offered that same advice to her friends, as she reflected, “Yeah, my friends say, I do not know how your family does it. Nobody fights with each other, and they are always there for you.” At the time of the interview, Gloria continued to advise them when arguing on the phone with their parents to just relax, let it go, just relax. Gloria indicated that,

You really are not there with them. Just try to ignore it. You really cannot do anything. It is worse and stressful for your mom because you are fighting; and because you are arguing, she is going to be sad. So tell her ok, mom that it is fine; remember to ignore that you are angry or she is making you angry.

Gloria reported feeling sad when she observed her friends arguing with their families to the point where no one is speaking to each other for days or even weeks. Gloria shared that sometimes her friends make fun of her by saying “Oh you are just the good daughter; your parents never fight with you; they do not hit you with the chankla, or yell at you.” Gloria realizes the benefits of not arguing with her parents allow her to concentrate and focus on her studies.

**Identification of cultural awareness that lead to positive outcomes (R3).**

Gloria stated living under the concept of *familismo* provided a support system that helped her when she had problems, because there was always a feeling that she was not alone. Gloria shared,

I always worry about either school or economic things, like money. What am I going to do if I do not have enough money or I do not get my paycheck? So, when I go home, I do not like to ask for money, but my family is always there for me. My brothers give me money, like for gas or whatever I need. It could
be 20 bucks or 50 dollars; whatever they can give me. I get support from my family and it gives me a wonderful feeling of not being alone in the world.

Gloria is the first female in her family to move out of the house and first to attend college. She decided not to raise her daughters under the cultural concept of the good daughter dilemma. Gloria shared, “My mom taught me the way she was raised, the way she grew up. Daughters must be good; everything was about being a good girl. You have to listen to your parents, and you have to do what parents say.” In conclusion, Gloria did share that she appreciated that her parents raised her to be hardworking and a responsible person. These values and work ethics are what she reported she will instill in her children.

In summary, Gloria attributed a large part of her college success to her cultural heritage and background. She was raised with a strong sense of familismo—being provided with someone who was always there to help her with any school, monetary, or personal problem. In closing, Gloria expressed how she appreciated how the family allowed her personal growth by permitting her to experience college life.

**Interview 5**

At the time of the interview, Gloria P. was a 21-year old single full time student and first in her family to attend college. Gloria does not work outside of school, but she was very involved in school events and clubs; she served as the president of the UC MECHA Club. Her major was sociology with a double minor in Chicana studies and political sciences. Gloria planned to continue her education at University of California, Los Angeles to earn a master’s degree in social sciences. She planned to work as a social worker for a nonprofit organization. Gloria reported
that she loved to read, and that she desires to write her own Chicana literature collection.

**Identification of how the cultural concepts affected the college experience of the Latina student (R1).** Gloria defined *familismo* as putting family before anything else, such as school, and in some cases, even work. Gloria shared that in her Chicano literature classes at UC Merced, she learned about the good daughter dilemma, and stated “I have lived it myself.” She continued by saying,

The good daughter dilemma is for me, being good. I mean, obviously following my parents instructions, their rules and not breaking them, otherwise I would be considered a bad daughter. It would include, not having a boyfriend till a daughter finishes school, or especially not having sex before marriage, that would be one of the good daughter’s dilemma. Then of course it would mean helping out around the house, helping with my brothers with their homework, taking and picking them up from school.

Gloria expressed benefits of the cultural concepts that affect the college experience for Latinas which teaches people how to be a community; even though in a small setting, there are many benefits. Gloria continued,

Latinas learn how to work with others, how to understand others, most importantly help each other. If we do not help each other as a family, then who else is going to help you. The best advantage of the cultural concepts is that we have our parents who back us up, even when things go wrong, to provide their support, financially or in any way they can, even to include the support of our extended family.

**Identification of successful strategies (R2).** Gloria reported a time when her parents were struggling with money, and she shared a story:

When I was in high school, my parents were offered a business opportunity that they immediately fell in love and decided to sign up. They started promoting their products, and working the business. This took up most of their time; they would be gone most evenings and even on the weekends.
Since Gloria was the oldest, and the daughter, she was asked to help her mom by taking care of her brothers. It was both hard and stressful because Gloria had school work and carried the sole responsibility of having to care for her brothers. At first, it was difficult for Gloria, since she really did not want to take on this responsibility. She just wanted to do school activities, and really did not agree with the whole gender roles in the Mexican-American culture. But obviously, she had to conform to this because she could not leave her brothers without proper care and attention. Gloria found herself juggling both school and the responsibilities for her brothers. Therefore, she would have to do homework during class to keep up or use available free time during school. She elaborated on this:

When I got home, I would immediately get to my homework; if I did not finish in the evening, then I finished the next day, really early in the morning, or during the advisory period, which is free time to do homework; I took advantage of every opportunity.

Gloria concluded, “I guess that is how I juggled school and remained being a good daughter.” Gloria feels maintaining strong familial relationships has promoted the success of her college experience. Gloria stated that since she started college, her parents have not placed any unnecessary family responsibilities upon her; in fact, they have asked her to put education before anything else. They do not expect Gloria to fulfill unnecessary family obligations while she attends school.

Gloria does try to give advice to her friends regarding conflicts that occur under familismo conditions. She shared that there are many deep conversations with her friends regarding money issues since most of them have student loans that allow them to attend school. Gloria shared the story of one friend who had ongoing heated
arguments with her parents regarding student loans. Gloria conveys that her friend was unable to live solely on her financial aid loans. Her friend was unable to help her parents understand that she cannot make the money stretch, no matter how hard she tried. Her friend felt that she might have to quit school if she did not have additional assistance from home. Gloria listened to her friend and encouraged her to keep giving her best in school because in the end it would pay off. Gloria offered her friends this following advice: “Do not give up; continue with school no matter how hard it gets, or how many sleepless nights we have had. How many times we have wanted to rip our hair because we are frustrated during mid-terms or finals.”

**Identification of cultural awareness that lead to positive outcomes (R3).** In considering how she will raise her own children, Gloria reported that she would not impose the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma on her daughters. Gloria indicated, “I am obviously going to encourage them to attend college and not force traditional gender roles on them. I know other parents that insist their daughters learn to cook, because when they get married, they cook for their husbands, care for the family and the house.” Gloria continued by sharing,

> I will tell my daughters that they have options in their lives. If they love their careers, they will not have to worry about cooking meals; they can pay for someone to cook. I definitely will teach them about the cultural tradition of *familismo* and that they have choices and options. I want my girls to be empowered feminists, not to be depending on men.

Gloria concluded this question by remarking, “For my daughters, I will let them play a big role in persuading each other. I will give them my example, of being the oldest
and only girl, a role model for my brothers and my cousins. Then if all goes good, they will be the ones imposing familismo on themselves, like me.”

In summary, Gloria expressed how these cultural concepts provided positive outcomes for her college experience:

I guess growing up around this cultural setting, even before it was like kind of imposed on me, you know when I was in high school, like I said taking care of brothers when my parents went out to promote their business and talk to people. Now, I kind of impose this on myself because I am the oldest female on my mom’s side of the family and I am the first generation student attending college. I have taken it upon myself to open up the path towards higher education, and everything else that comes with it, opportunities that could open up a way to help our family out of poverty. Um, oh, so I feel myself as a role model for them, and even my aunt and uncles, they have put me as a role model too. So this has shaped my life, because it motivates me to keep going, because my little ones depend on me. One of my mom’s sisters has three daughters, and they look up to me, especially the middle child; her name is Janet. She tells everyone that she wants to be like Gloria; I want to continue to higher education and attend UC Merced.

**Interview 6**

At the time of the interview, Elizeth was a 22-year old single full-time senior who was the first in her family to attend college. She worked 15 hours outside of school and volunteered up to four hours per week at school and in the community. Elizeth was on the dean’s list and maintained a 3.5 GPA when she graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in business management in June 2013. Elizeth planned to continue her education by earning a Master’s degree in accounting that would lead to a career in business. She had planned to give advice to her siblings on what college classes to take and guide them on available resources to help them succeed. In Elizeth’s own words, “I am about helping others.”
Identification of how these cultural concepts affected the college experience of the Latina student (R1). Elizeth expressed her feelings on living under the cultural concepts of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma by stating, “You cannot do what you want first because it is them or else they will get mad because you did not help.” Her parents told her that she needs to help them, so the family will do be better financially. For example, if Elizeth did not take care of her brothers and wanted to stay after school, her mom would have to hire someone to take care of them, or her mom would have to stay home and not work. So Elizeth felt it was her duty to stay home to help her parents, so her mother could make and save money. Elizeth described herself as a good daughter because she placed the needs of the family before her needs or what she may have wanted.

These cultural concepts affected Elizeth’s college experience deeply because at first her parents did not want to let her attend UC Merced; they felt that she would not come back to help the family. It was hard for Elizeth to choose to attend school since a good daughter’s obligation is to put family needs before her needs. Elizeth negotiated with her parents and agreed to their wishes by expressing the following:

Yes, I told them, just let me go to school. I promise to come back home on the weekends and holidays; it is only 30–40 minutes away. I am really close to my parents because I am the one who helps them. They would come home from work, the house will be clean and dinner on the table. So when I go to school and graduate, I will find a good job so my mom will not have to work anymore. That was my deal I made with my parents.

Identification of successful strategies (R2). Elizeth shared when she decided to attend college, her parents did not want to let her go. Because Elizeth is the oldest and would leave the family without anyone to help them, her parents opposed
Elizeth’s college plans. At that time, Elizeth did most of the cleaning, cooking, and caretaking of her siblings at home. She exclaimed, “I told them I was going to attend UC Santa Barbara, my parents told me, No! No! No!, you cannot go that far away.” Her parents continued to oppose the idea of Elizeth leaving the area to attend college. Elizeth did not argue with her parents and asked a representative from UC Scholars to speak to her parents. The representative explained to Elizeth’s parents that Elizeth had good grades and could receive financial aid to assist her with college tuition and living expenses. The representative then told the parents that UC Merced is about 45 miles from their hometown of Madera. Elizeth’s parents told her that they would think about it. After many hours of family discussions and negotiation, Elizeth’s parents finally consented and allowed her to leave home to attend UC Merced. Her parents insisted that she would have to come home on the weekends and all holidays. Elizeth agreed to their terms. Therefore, in her freshman and sophomore years at UC Merced, her dad came to pick her up every weekend. In her junior year, she finally bought a car and drove home about every other weekend.

Identification of cultural awareness that lead to positive outcomes (R3).

Elizeth defined familismo as a sense of selflessness, of putting others first. In her words, familismo is

when you put your family before yourself. The good daughter means you are supposed to be good girl, putting the family first. For me, they are almost the same, I think. The good daughter, you need to be a good example, and then you put your family first and you come afterwards.

Elizeth explained that one advantage of living under the cultural concepts of familismo and good daughter dilemma is the huge part she plays in her family’s happiness and
well-being. This gives Elizeth the peace of mind to pursue personal academic goals and meet the terms of the agreement with her parents. Elizeth shared a couple of thoughts pertaining to how she might in the future raise daughters:

I will teach them to put what they want first, and then what the family wants. At least, try to just keep it equal, learn to be balanced. For example, if there is something she really wants to do and it is really, really, really important to her, I will encourage her to it, then maybe she can help the family afterwards.

In summary, Elizeth expressed how these cultural concepts provided a positive outcome for her college experience; the ongoing support from her family provided her with an incentive to earn a college degree so she could return home and find a job that will help the family financially.

Summary

In Chapter IV, this researcher provided a summary of the interviews as they related to each research question. In Chapter V, this researcher will provide conclusions from the analysis of the data collected via the interviews.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Phinney et al. (2005) indicated that Latina college students face numerous challenges that limit their ability to complete college. One notable barrier is the challenge of being first generation students. Their families have little or no experience with higher education and consequently are less able to provide information, support, and advice.

Culturally, Latina college students face multiple expectations, responsibilities, and obligations to their family. These family obligations may conflict with school responsibilities, therefore placing a Latina in a cultural bind (Sy & Romero, 2008). Traditionally, the female has the role of the good daughter, since she is expected to prioritize family needs over her own (Espinoza, 2010). The good daughter dilemma that Latinas often confront while pursuing higher education requires a discussion of the cultural value known as familismo. Familismo is a Hispanic cultural construct that emphasizes cooperation and interdependency within a multigenerational family unit (Espinoza, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of the cultural concepts of the good daughter phenomenon and familismo on the Latina college experience. The interviews were conducted with Latina students who were enrolled in their junior or senior year of college and who identified with these cultural concepts. This researcher
asked questions that elicited feedback and input on the impact of these cultural concepts on the Latina college experience.

This chapter summarizes the information from Chapter IV and draws conclusions based on the research questions. In addition, this researcher will provide recommendations for further study.

Summary

The goal of this study was to examine the effects and impacts of the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma on a Latina’s college experience. Based on this goal, this researcher prepared three research questions: (1) how do the cultural concepts of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma affect the college experience of Latina women; (2) what strategies are successful in resolving conflicts between family and college obligations; and (3) how does a Latina student’s awareness of the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma lead to more positive outcomes in her college experience. The following paragraphs will summarize the findings on the six interviews constructed from each of the research questions.

Identification of How the Cultural Concepts of *Familismo* and the Good Daughter Dilemma Affected the College Experience of the Latina Student (R1)

All six Latinas self-identified with the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma. Each shared stories, circumstances and scenarios regarding the effects of these cultural concepts on their college experience. A common dilemma that all six Latinas had to overcome is the traditional stigma of staying home after
high school. Latinas deal with parental expectations to live and stay close to home, creating stressors to choose family over personal commitments and college (Rodriguez et al., 2000).

All six students were first in their family to attend college and they each experienced heavy opposition to leave home from their parents and family members. Four of the students were the eldest daughters in their family units and were expected to stay home to help with the household chores, family finances, and caring for siblings. All six shared that there were hours of discussions and negotiations with parents to reach an agreement to attend college. For example, they all had to agree to return home on weekends and all holidays, and all students promised to call, text or email daily. All six Latinas believed that holding parent approval provided them with total familismo support. This familismo assistance provided more positive outcomes in each Latina’s college experience that resulted being first in their family to graduate with a college degree.

Another dilemma that affected all six Latinas was finances. Their families provide little financial assistance; therefore, the students relied heavily on financial aid. Five of the six Latina students worked part time outside of school. Research finds that balancing the competing demands of job and school work is one reason that Latina college students often terminate their educational pursuits (Castillo & Hill, 2004). However, each student expressed that attending college was indeed a financial challenge and agreed that earning a college degree was a first step in helping their families out of poverty.
Identification of Successful Strategies Used in Resolving Conflicts Between Family and College Obligations (R2)

Latinas who attend college are caught between two cultures. At school, the individualistic college culture is predominant, while at home the Latino communal collective approach to family is the norm. This dualistic home/school dilemma is complicated. Research shows that strong family ties have positive academic outcomes. Studies also indicate that strong family ties foster academic success and facilitate adjustment to university environments (Espinoza, 2010).

All six Latinas agreed maintaining open lines of communication kept strong families ties and allowed them to keep their good daughter image. In an effort to effectively navigate the two social spheres of family and school, all six Latinas practiced the strategies of negotiation and compromise. One student defined compromise in this manner, “You need to make it work between your parents and other family members. Keep traditions, like the role that you have at home, keep it, even when you are four hours away from home.” Therefore, four of the students agreed to go home every weekend during their freshman and sophomore years, and most of them promised to be home for all important family gatherings and holidays. All six participants agreed to telephone call, text or email their parents daily to keep harmony in the family so they could focus on their studies.

All six participants shared their strategies with fellow students who constantly argued with their parents. All participants agreed the best advice they gave to their
friends was to keep open communication with their family, and no arguing. Most of the participants agreed that it was important to hold to their traditional role as the good and obedient daughter even though they were attending school anywhere from fifty to hundreds of miles away from home.

**Identification of the Cultural Concepts That Lead to Positive Outcomes in the College Experience (R3)**

All six Latinas shared views on the identification of the cultural concepts of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma that led to more positive outcomes during their college experiences. Awareness of the good daughter dilemma gave insight to three of the six Latina students to better understand their traditionalist Hispanic parents who experienced difficulty understanding why their daughter wanted to leave home at such an early age. All six students expressed the importance of the cultural concept of *familismo*, namely, that remaining strongly connected to a family provides a loving support system.

Five of the six Latinas reported that they planned to retain the cultural concept of *familismo* in raising their daughters. All five agreed that *familismo* provides a benefit, where each member is connected to a familial support system. These Latinas believed that raising their daughters with a sense of tradition would inculcate pride in their heritage and a love for their culture.

All six young women agreed that they would not impose the good daughter dilemma when raising their daughters. They did not want their daughters to stay home to cook, clean, and care for the family members only because they are girls. All six
shared that they want to provide options in raising their daughters, encouraging them to pursue higher education. They all agreed that it is important to support daughters in whatever path they decide to walk; after all, it is their life.

**Conclusions**

**Identification of How the Cultural Concepts of *Familismo* and the Good Daughter Dilemma Affected the College Experience of the Latina Student (R1)**

The identification of the cultural concepts of *familismo* and the good daughter dilemma provided insight to the six Latina college students in overcoming traditional obligations, family opposition, and financial problems that affected their college experiences. Understanding these cultural concepts helped them to create a balance between the cultural expectations, obligations of their families, and the reality of attaining higher education.

This researcher believes that awareness and understanding of these concepts of *familismo* and good daughter dilemma empowered the six Latina students to overcome barriers and challenges that they encountered during their college experience.

**Identification of Successful Strategies Used in Resolving Conflicts Between Family and College Obligations (R2)**

All six students identified the successful strategies of negotiation and compromise as the most effective tools in resolving conflicts with their families. Each Latina student had to fulfill agreements or expectations with the family and all agreed that compromise, rather than arguing, worked best. All six participants agreed that
staying in daily communication with their families provided harmony that allowed them to focus on school commitments and studies.

This researcher suggests that college preparation programs serving young Latina students who find themselves under the cultural bind of _familismo_ and good daughter dilemma can teach strategies of negotiation and compromise in resolving conflicts with family members and school obligations.

**Identification of the Cultural Concepts That Lead To Positive Outcomes in the Latina College Experience (R3)**

All six Latinas shared that understanding these cultural concepts gave them self-confidence to meet the challenges of college life. Appreciating these cultural concepts presented each student with strategies to help them balance their school and family obligations. All six students felt it was important to remain close to the family unit that provided a support system that led to their success in college.

This researcher suggests this study serve as a useful tool for high school administrators and counselors when developing strategies, programs and services for Latina students and their parents to better prepared them for higher education.

**Recommendations**

1. Replicate this study with Latina students who are enrolled as freshmen at a four-year college or university.

2. Replicate this study with Latina students who are high school juniors and seniors
3. Replicate this study to gather perceptions from parents of Latina high school students.
REFERENCES
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APPENDIX
APPENDIX

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Effects of the cultural concepts of *Familismo* and good daughter dilemma
On the Latina college experience.

I am requesting your voluntary participation in a research I am conducting as
part of a fulfillment of my Master’s degree through California State University,
Stanislaus. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of the cultural concepts
of *familismo* & good daughter dilemma on the Latina college experience.

As part of the data collection, I plan to conduct interviews asking questions
that have been developed especially for this study. The interviews may take about 30-
40 minutes of your time and you may withdraw or refuse to answer any question at
any time without penalty or loss of benefits. The interview will be tape recorded and
transcribed for analytic purposes. There are not any known foreseeable risks to
students who participate in this project.

The information you give will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure
under law. Your name or references that might identify you will not appear in any
reports of this research. The information that is gained will be used for educational
purposes and professional publications. Only the researcher will have access to the
information collected in this project. Any information obtained in connection with the
study will remain confidential. All data will be maintained for a period of one year
after data collection and then destroyed by the researcher.
If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by signing below. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact the researcher, Rebecca Rodriguez Lincoln, at (209) 631-6193 or my supervising professor, Dr. John Borba, at 209-667-3260. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Campus Compliance Officer, CSU Stanislaus at (209) 667-3493.

I have read the information described above and agree to participate in this study.

Name of Participant (please print)  
Date

Signature of Researcher  
Date