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**Publication Date**

2015

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

College as a Mental Construct:

Contrasting the Cognitive Frames of Latina/o Parents and Policymakers

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in Education

by

Wendy Yezennia Perez

2015



## ABSTRACT FOR DISSERTATION

College as a Mental Construct:

Contrasting the Cognitive Frames of Latina/o Parents and Policymakers

Wendy Yezennia Perez

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor John S. Rogers, Chair

Although Latinas/os are the fastest growing population in California, their attainment of Bachelor's degrees is not keeping pace with their rapidly increasing numbers. In the literature, little attention is being given to mental structures, or cognitive frames, that Latina/o parents and policymakers have regarding college. People use cognitive frames to organize and understand experience. Thus, framing can lead to radically distinct understandings related to college. My study examined how Latina/o parents and policymakers framed the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem. Importantly, I also explored what factors influence the development and maintenance of cognitive frames as well as analyzed race within emerging cognitive frames. Understanding the similarities and differences in the cognitive frames of Latina/o parents yields critical information about why many Latinas/os do not ultimately pursue a postsecondary education. For policymakers, documenting their frames illuminates ways that they could set policy agendas related to college for Latina/o students. In my study, I used qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews with 10 Latina/o immigrant parents and eight policymakers in one metropolitan region in Southern California.

Findings indicate that Latina/o immigrant parents and policymakers have deep frames for the importance of college, but most Latina/o parents' frames for college quality are still emerging. A second finding is that most Latina/o immigrant parents frame differential educational opportunities and outcomes in terms of individual circumstances, while policymakers frame these as systemic phenomena. Third, while sources of college information that shape the frames of Latina/o parents and policymakers are different, both rely on their own experiences to shape their frames about college. Lastly, most Latina/o parents held an equity frame where all children should go to college, while most policymakers held the frame of choice where all children should have the choice to go to college.

The dissertation of Wendy Yezennia Perez is approved.

Robert Cooper

Patricia M. McDonough

Maria Estela Zarate

John S. Rogers, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

## Dedication

To my mom and dad who emigrated from Ecuador to the United States in search of a better future. Their dreams, struggles, and encouragement inspired me to pursue the advancement of social justice in education as my life's work.

And to parents across the country who desire the best educational opportunities for their children as well as the community activists-students, parents, teachers, principals, community organizers, researchers, policy advocates, policymakers, and others-who have committed to the fight for educational equity in our urban schools and communities.

Finally, Christian Hernandez, thank you for prayerfully walking alongside me throughout this academic journey and constantly reminding me that my research is valuable for those whose voices have not always been represented in places of power and privilege, such as the academy.

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## Acknowledgements

The pursuit of my doctorate has been one of the most rewarding and challenging educational experiences. Without the support of many the completion of my research would not have been possible.

First, I would like to thank my dissertation committee members. To John S. Rogers, my dissertation chair and advisor, thank you for your guidance and mentorship for the past five years. Your commitment to social justice as a scholar is one that I was honored to experience as a graduate student at UCLA and as a graduate student researcher at UCLA IDEA. I appreciate the time and effort that you committed to ensure that my study was conducted to be reflective of UCLA's high standard for rigorous research. To my remaining committee members Robert Cooper, Patricia M. McDonough, and Maria Estela Zarate thank you for your expertise and commitment to educational equity as professors. I felt privileged to have such a powerful group of scholars on my dissertation committee. Our meaningful dialogue about my study was incredible and I will carry much of your advice as I think about my future research.

Second, I would like to thank my colleagues at UCLA who have made my graduate experience richer. To my UCLA IDEA colleagues, I cannot thank you enough for being an exemplary collective of staff and researchers that worked tirelessly to produce high caliber research that advanced equity and access in education. Please know that I considered UCLA IDEA home during my years at UCLA and in large part it was because of you. A special thank you to Melanie Bertrand and Rhoda Freelon for taking me under their wing during my first years at UCLA IDEA and UCLA. Another big thank you to Jane Margolis and Julie Flapan at the UCLA Computer Science Project for your support. I would also like to thank my Urban Schooling Cohort. Your genuine interest in my research and success as a scholar was something

that I appreciated greatly. To my Dissertation Writing Group, thank you for the advice, compassion, encouragement, and understanding that you provided while I completed my dissertation. I don't know how I could have done this without you! I would especially like to thank Yvette Martinez-Vu for being my writing partner and amiga. I looked forward to our countless writing sessions! You made the difficult process of completing a dissertation exponentially more enjoyable and productive. Thank you to the UCLA graduate school community, there are many who I didn't name, but who also enhanced my experience at UCLA.

Second, I would like to say thank you to colleagues outside UCLA. I would like to thank Jaime Del Razo, Marisa Saunders, and Michelle Renée from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University because you not only hired me to do meaningful research for AISR, you also greatly encouraged me to complete my own dissertation research. Jaime Del Razo, the many dissertation check-ins we had and the advice that you gave me along the way was invaluable. Also, thank you to Alma Zaragoza-Petty, my writing partner and friend. Having regular discussions about our dissertation goals and to encourage each other to continue dissertating step by step was much appreciated.

Third, to my family and friends thank you for your support throughout my doctoral process. Thank you to my Pomona ladies-Lourdes, Jocelyn, Maite, Anbinh, Stacy, and Mary-for your friendship throughout the years. There were many phone calls or meet-ups with each of you during certain points in my doctoral experience when you offered encouragement and prayers at critical times during my studies. A special thank you for those who prayed or checked in with me on a weekly basis during much of my five years at UCLA-Lourdes, Jocelyn, and Anbinh-it made a difference! Jasmine Cline and Elizabeth Poloskov, thank you for your friendship and understanding during my doctoral studies as well. To my ABC family, especially Angelica,

Ofelia, Leslie, Myrna, Veronica, and Ed thank you for caring about my research and continuing the work of educational advocacy in Los Angeles.

Fourth, to my family, thank you for always encouraging me to finish my Ph.D! Thank you to my extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins including Tia Alejita, Milton, Cindy, Christina, Giselle, and Giannina. Your support and belief in my capacity has meant the world to me.

To my sister Candy, thank you for supporting me during our childhood so that I could pursue every intellectual interest and educational opportunity that came my way! Also, thank you for encouraging me to work hard and do my best!

Mami y papi, gracias por su amor y apoyo. Ustedes me han inspirado mas de lo que se imaginan! Han estado a mi lado en cada etapa de mi vida, celebrando mis triunfos y ayudandome durante tiempos dificiles. Este doctorado no solo es mio es de nosotros. Lo hicimos!

Thank you Christian for your love and understanding throughout my doctoral studies. You better than anyone in my life know how I experienced the demands of attaining a Ph.D and your presence throughout my graduate studies gave me the extra encouragement and strength to keep going.

A final thank you to the parents and policymakers who were a part of this study. Thank you sharing your lives with me! Gracias a los padres y a los que hacen polizas que estuvieron en mi estudio. Gracias por compartir sus vidas conmigo!

I'd like to end with the lines below that have served me well during my doctoral studies.

Phil: 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Paulo Freire: "True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their

trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands--whether of individuals or entire peoples--need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.”

# WENDY YEZENNIA PEREZ

## Curriculum Vitae

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### **CURRENT RESEARCH INTERESTS**

Cognitive frames regarding Latinas/os and college, educational policy in urban education, issues of equity and access in K-16 education, Latinas/os and college access, and critical examinations of race and class in urban schooling.

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2012 Rogers, J., Terriquez, V. & Perez, W. (2012). Powerful Learning: Californians for Justice's Impact on the Educational and Civic Pathways of Youth Members. Los Angeles: UCLA IDEA.

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## **AWARDS, HONORS, GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

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2015 UCLA Department of Education Travel Grant

2015 Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society Membership and Stipend

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Statement of Problem**

It is projected that in 2025, 41% of jobs in California will require at least a Bachelor's degree and that California will not produce enough college-educated workers to meet this need (Johnson & Sengupta, 2009). A recent report by the Campaign for College Opportunity (2013) found that only 10.7% of Latinas/os in California have a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to 39.3% of Whites. Moreover, while the Latina/o population aged 18-24 is 46.7%, only 20.4% are enrolled in the University of California school system and 32.8% are enrolled in the California State University system (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). The enrollment at community colleges is slightly higher at 38.7% (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). Unfortunately, many Latinas/os at community colleges do not transfer and never attain their Bachelor's degree (Moore & Shulock, 2010). In California, at 51% for U.S. born Latinas/os and 28% for immigrants, Latinas/os have some of the lowest rates of postsecondary enrollment when compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Terriquez, 2012). For Latinas/os, a Bachelor's is important for it yields higher incomes, better health, and increased civic engagement (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). And given that Latinas/os comprise 38.1% of the state's population, their educational attainment is key to strengthening California's economy (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Yet, in California, Latina/o young adults had one of the highest unemployment rates and some of the lowest wages when compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Rogers & Freelon, 2013).

Although Latinas/os are not attaining Bachelor's degrees at the same rate as other Californians, their educational aspirations are quite high. One national survey found that nearly 89% of Latinas/os say that a college education is important for success in life and more than 77% of these young Latinas/os say that their parents think that going to college is the most important



thing to do after high school (Lopez, 2009). Further, in California, a statewide survey revealed that 73% of Latinas/os say that success in today's work world depends on a college education. This was the highest percentage among all racial and ethnic groups surveyed (Baldassare, Bonner, Petek, & Shrestha, 2011). Research also demonstrates that Latina/o parents have high college aspirations for their children and that they place great value on a college education. In one study several Latina/o parents described how each of them held high educational aspirations for their children (Kiyama, 2010). In another study, Latina college students reported that parents encouraged their daughters to aspire towards college by actions such as talking to them about the importance of going to college (Ceja, 2004).

Several explanations have been given for this disconnect in Latina/o student and parental aspirations for college including: student and family characteristics, high school conditions, educational policies regarding high school and college, racism, and the historical and political realities of Latinas/os in the United States. While it is important to explore each of these reasons for the gap in educational attainment of Latinas/os, it is critical to understand what else may explain the lag in educational attainment.

Research about the cognitive frames that parents and policymakers hold regarding college can reveal explicit understandings related to vital issues in higher education that can affect postsecondary degree attainment. Cognitive frames, or mental constructs, are less studied in the college access literature. Lakoff (2006) described cognitive frames this way "frames are mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality and sometimes what we take to be reality." What Lakoff describes is the use of mental frames to interpret the world. The cognitive filters or "frames" that Latina/o parents define can indicate ways that cognitive frames shape the understanding that Latina/o parents have in relation to college and may challenge our

existing notions of how Latina/o parents make meaning of college. Additionally, how policymakers conceptualize college is significant because they create policies that will affect the college going opportunities for Latina/o students. Policymakers have the power to craft policies that are responsive to underrepresented students, such as Latinas/os, in higher education or they can choose to ignore this population. For this reason, my study will explore how Latina/o parents and policymakers frame ideas about college including the value and purpose of college, who belongs in college, and explanations for gaps in college completion for Latinas/os.

### **Student and Family Context**

First, studies cite the effects of student and family characteristics as contributing to the disparities in college attainment for Latina/o students. Academic ability is one such measure of student level characteristics. Academic ability is a strong predictor for four-year college enrollment. In one study, taking advanced math classes increased the likelihood for four-year college enrollment for Latinas/os by almost 45 times (Nuñez & Kim, 2012). Unfortunately, many Latinas/os do not access these college preparatory courses. Indeed, in California, only 16% of Latinas/os complete the college preparatory curriculum required to be eligible for California's four-year university system (Rogers, Bertrand, Freelon, & Fanelli, 2011). The College Board also reports that less than half of Latinas/os who take an Advanced Placement test receive a passing score (College Board, 2014). Consequently, even Latinas/os enrolled in college preparatory classes are not passing college level examinations.

Lack of income has presented challenges for Latina/o students to attend college. Low levels of family income have been found to negatively correlate with Latina/o college-going behaviors like applying to college (Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997). Moreover, free and

reduced lunch rates are significant predictors of four-year college enrollment for Latinas/os, where lower rates equate with higher four-year college enrollment (Nuñez & Kim, 2012).

Latina/o familial college barriers are connected to the broader society's low valuation of cultural and social capital found in many Latina/o communities. There are several types of capital including cultural and social capital. Cultural capital includes cultural attributes, language, and cultural knowledge that reflect a certain social class (Perna, 2006). Social capital is slightly different as it is about advantages derived from information transmitted by social networks that parents can gain entry to (Perna, 2006).<sup>1</sup>

Language is one form of cultural capital that influences Latina/o college access and choice. Latinas/os who are English Language Learners (ELLs) must learn academic content and master the English language to be successful in U.S. schools (Callahan, 2005). When placed in English Language (EL) classes, language minority students, who are most likely to be placed in EL and who have lower rates of language proficiency, perform better when placed in EL classes, while others with more language proficiency and who are less likely to be placed in EL courses perform worse academically when placed in these language classes (Callahan, Wilkins, & Mueller, 2010). This is problematic because academic tracking can have a critical impact on the educational trajectory of ELLs and it has been found to be a better predictor of achievement than English proficiency (Callahan, 2005). There are thousands of Spanish-speaking immigrant Latinas/os that are undocumented and will find that they are ineligible for several college scholarships and financial aid resources (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010).

Latina/o student family and extended family networks can be helpful to their exposure to college or hinder that process depending on the experience of their contacts (Perez &

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<sup>1</sup> Yosso (2005) also discussed different types of capital in her community cultural wealth model

McDonough, 2008). According to Perez and McDonough (2008), while Latina/o parents do not share college information with their children, Latina/o children do exchange college information with parents. Latina/o's social capital in the form of social networks may also lack important college knowledge resulting in them not choosing to attend college. TRPI's study on college knowledge found that 2/3 (65.7%) of Latinas/os surveyed miss half of the items on a college knowledge mini-test (Tornatzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002). Latina/o parents may not have the same college knowledge as other parents because many of them have not attended college and many in their social networks have not attended college.

### **High School Context**

Second, high school quality factors are used to explain why Latinas/os do not attend college at rates in proportion to their population. Latinas/os tend to be in high schools that lack challenging college preparatory curriculum. In California, as many as 65% of Latinas/os are in high schools that do not have enough college preparatory courses or enough qualified teachers to teach these classes (Oakes, Valladares, Renée, Fanelli, Medina, & Rogers, 2007). A high number of Latina/o students are also not placed in the types of advanced math and science classes that prepare them for four-year colleges (Oakes et al., 2007). Since Latinas/os who take advanced level math are 45 times more likely to enroll in a four-year college compared with those not enrolling at all, this is an important challenge that Latinas/os must overcome (Nunez & Kim, 2012). Additionally, many Latinas/os attend high schools with severe qualified teacher shortages and where teachers lack training in the college preparatory classes that they are teaching, and these numbers are even higher for math classes (Oakes et al., 2007).

Another challenge faced by Latinas/os who want to attend college is that they are concentrated in schools with the lowest quartile of parental education and average family income

(Perna & Titus, 2005). College counseling about the process of getting into and staying in college is especially important for students who do not have support at home (Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Loring Thomas, Bell, Anderson, & Li, 2008). However, at high schools with minimal resources, academic counseling is focused on high school graduation instead of college enrollment (Perna et al., 2008). This lack of institutional support for Latina/o parents and students exacerbates the college knowledge gap. In fact, low resource high schools are places where parents have to initiate meeting with counselors to get college related information (Perna et al., 2008). Also, high SES parents receive more college information from schools than low SES parents do (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Unfortunately, Latinas/os attend high schools where they are simply counseled to graduate from high school and where knowledge about higher education is not readily available to them or their parents.

### **Racism in High Schools**

Third, studies demonstrate that race plays a role in the college attendance of Latinas/os. Latina/o high school students are not attending four-year colleges at the same levels as other ethnic and racial groups (Martin, Karabel, & Jaquez, 2005). A study of admissions to the University of California (UC) found that the percentage of high school graduates admitted to a UC institution was negatively correlated with the percentage of Latinas/os at the schools but positively correlated with percentages of Asian American and White students (Martin et al., 2005). Equally important, Latinas/os experience racism and discrimination in high schools. Teachers can have low expectations and stereotypes about Latinas/os being “bad kids” (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Teachers also make false assumptions that all Latina/o students are English Learners or that they were not born in the United States (Howard, 2010). Noguera (2001) presents the educational challenge of meeting minority student needs without provoking

the wrath of the parents of high achieving White students. One strong example of this is the reluctance that White middle class families have had to detrack (Wells & Serna, 1996). Middle class families who are often White have also opted out of city public schools that often have a high number of Latina/o students (Balfanz, 2009). Since educational opportunities are not distributed equally to Latinas/os because of racism this is another barrier to college enrollment and persistence.

### **High School Policy Context**

Fourth, actual high school policies and the political context in which they are enacted affect Latinas/os attending and persisting in college. If we look at Latinas/os and college access in the state of California it is important to examine high school graduation requirements, teacher and counselor to student ratios, and per pupil expenditures. Currently, California's high school requirements do not align to the coursework required by the University of California or California State University system (California Department of Education, 2012). Since many Latinas/os are in schools with the least amounts of parental education we can conclude that many of these students represent potential first generation college students (Perna & Titus, 2005).

Having different high school and college admission requirements can be confusing to them and is detrimental to four-year college enrollment. In one study conducted in California and five other states less than 12% of students surveyed knew the curricular requirements for admission to college (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Another reason why Latinas/os do not have as much college information from either teacher or counselors is that California teacher and counselor to student ratios are some of the highest in the nation (Rogers, Bertrand, Freelon, & Fanelli, 2011). This means that fewer adults are available to counsel Latina/o students who desperately need college information. Unfortunately, funding more teachers and counselors is

difficult since California's per pupil expenditures are one of the lowest in the state at \$8,852 per student (Rogers et al., 2011).

### **Historical and Political Background of Latinas/os in Education**

Lastly, political and historical considerations also need to be taken into account in the discussion around lack of college access and persistence for Latina/o students (Bedolla, 2010). In California, as a large number of Mexicans arrived in the early 1900's, they were barred from attending schools with White children (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999). Mexicans were also tracked into vocational education, branded as having low intelligence, and described in derogatory terms by White Californians (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999). In its earliest years the University of California system was mostly White and remained that way even after *Mendez v. Westminster* and *Brown v. Board of Education* and several years into the Civil Rights era (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999)

Politically, this historical legacy of separate and unequal education created a racially charged climate that has led to impactful state initiatives in California such as Proposition 13, Proposition 187, and Proposition 209. The first proposition placed limitations on property taxes and resulted in limiting the amount of money invested in public school education. The second proposition passed but large sections of it were ruled unconstitutional. It was targeted to prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving a free public education. The last proposition reversed affirmative action policies aimed to remedy past racial discrimination (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999). State initiatives are not the only relevant political phenomenon to take note of; in response to the lack of Latina/o and Black students in higher education local campaigns in cities like Los Angeles have also been organized.

One campaign in Los Angeles that advocated for increased college preparatory classes resulted from the community organizing efforts of Los Angeles youth and community advocacy groups (Rogers & Morrell, 2011). During the campaign, an organizing group named InnerCity Struggle (ICS) mobilized youth to demand the A-G policy for their East Los Angeles High Schools (Rogers & Morrell, 2011). ICS also worked in collaboration with the Communities for Educational Equity (CEE) to organize youth across Los Angeles to demand a college preparatory curriculum for their students. After this collaboration the college prep policy passed in 2005 (Rogers & Morrell, 2011). Community driven policy is important because policy is implemented at the ground level. The Los Angeles campaign focused on asking for increased college preparatory courses for Latina/o and African American students living in urban communities. As the history of discrimination and constrained resources suggests, the fight for equal education continues and involved mobilizing several actors to effect positive change.

Community driven policy is also crucial because there have been educational inequities that have resulted from district officials rather than parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community advocates creating policy (Rogers & Morrell, 2011). These inequities can arise because educational policies that are not informed by communities may not be responsive to its actual needs. In Los Angeles, these differences in educational equity were racialized as pockets where concentrations of African American and Latina/o students had fewer resources such as minimally prepared teachers and subpar school facilities (Rogers & Morrell, 2011). The A-G college prep policy mattered because it demonstrated the power of community members organized for policy change. It also supported the idea that urban communities want to provide college options to their students. Furthermore, CEE members reported that the conversation about going to college was positively changed by the policy (Rogers & Morrell, 2011).



## **Frame Analysis**

Although there are several important explanations for Latinas/os' lack of access to and completion of higher education, what has not been studied widely are the cognitive frames that Latina/o parents and policymakers have that may color their understanding and ideas about college. Cognitive frames are one way to explore these lines of thought. Frames are used to organize and understand your experience (Goffman, 1974). Cognitive frames vary across individuals and groups. For example, Lakoff (2006) explores cognitive framing among liberals and conservatives. A word such as "patriotism" conjures up different images and understandings among these politically diverse groups because it is activating distinct values for this notion of "patriotism" (Lakoff, 2006). These ideas will not only vary among groups of liberal and conservatives but each individual may have their own unique understanding of certain aspects of patriotism. Lakoff suggests that these cognitive frames affect political behavior. Similarly, the variance in conceptualizations regarding college can then lead to different college related actions. For Latina/o parents and students, this is important to interrogate because it may contribute to a better understanding of why Latinas/os are not accessing and completing college at higher rates. For policymakers, understanding their frames of thought matter because they are key decision makers who set policy that affects Latina/o students' opportunities.

Exploring cognitive frames for Latina/o parents, students, and policymakers can reveal unexamined assumptions and beliefs about college. Bateson (1972, 2000) uses several descriptions that are useful for understanding cognitive framing. First, he explains the double bind theory for schizophrenics where "meaning" is derived only in a contextual manner (Bateson, 1972, 2000). He later goes on to make a case that schizophrenic thinking affects how schizophrenics understand the world (Bateson, 1972, 2000). In effect, schizophrenics have a

“double take” where their experiences are framed by multiple factors (Bateson, 1972, 2000). This double take in comprehension is not only true for schizophrenics. It points to the idea that humans can have multiple (and sometimes even contradictory) understandings of an idea. This kind of thinking is supported by Bateson’s description of learning where a feedback loop through a process of trial and error causes the formation of habits that are later unexamined (Bateson, 1972, 2000). The idea is that if you go through enough instances of trial and error to solve problems at some point you will react automatically to the same problems. Similarly, cognitive frames can be seen as mental constructs that, once developed, remain unexamined. Yet, these cognitive frames are significant because they are lenses through which experience and ideas are interpreted.

According to Goffman (1974), frames emerge as “definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with the principles of organization which govern events-at least social ones-and our subjective involvement in them” (p.10-11). He also highlights that these are structures of experience rather than structures themselves (Goffman, 1974). To clarify, he means that frames are organizing our experiences, but he describes them as tangible structures. Goffman makes the case for the significance of mental structures, such as cognitive frames, to interpret experience. Experience and ideas do not independently create meaning, how one interprets these experiences and ideas is what creates meaning. Hence, framing can radically change meaning from one individual to another. Goffman (1974) further suggests that we use social frameworks to understand the world. Thus, a frame analysis can be understood as a social analysis.

Lakoff (2006) delves into the connection between cognitive framing and politics. In line with Bateson (1972, 2000) and Goffman (1974), frames “are mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality and sometimes create what we take to be reality” (Lakoff, 2006, p.

25). An added differentiation in cognitive framing is that of deep frames compared to surface frames. Surface frames depend on lexical frames, or frames that bring about the common meaning associated with a word. For example, the common meaning of the word “war” is a military battle. There are no underlying values behind this definition. It is strictly an understanding of the actual word “war.” Moreover, surface frames are activated by and depend on deep frames (Lakoff, 2006).

Deep frames are basic frames that constitute a moral worldview or a political philosophy (Lakoff, 2006). For example, during the U.S. “war on terror” in early 2001 the surface frame was activated by words like “war” and “terror” (Lakoff, 2006). This emphasis on war pushed the United States to lean towards military action rather than diplomacy to solve a foreign policy conflict. Meanwhile, deep frames that existed which already supported military intervention in foreign affairs as a general policy were activated by these surface frames and made the “war on terror” persist (Lakoff, 2006). Two important points that Lakoff (2006) summarizes when defining the key points in understanding cognitive frames are that “the use of frames is largely unconscious” (p.36) and that “frames define common sense” (p.36). These two descriptions emphasize the unexamined and pervasive nature of frames. Even though we largely leave frames unexamined they still influence our habitual thoughts on a range of subjects. Additionally, Gilliam and Bales (2001) used cognitive framing to better understand American attitudes about teenagers and the policy implications of these beliefs. Also, Gilliam and Iyengar (2005) studied the framing effects of media coverage on attitudes regarding juvenile crime. In one study Gilliam and Bales (2005) note how issues are framed in media messaging while in the other study Gilliam and Bales (2001) describe how cognitive framing can shape people’s beliefs and attitudes.

Several educational studies have incorporated cognitive framing. These studies center on issues, problems, or specific policies to try to uncover cognitive frames. One study found five different frames emerging from policymakers, head teachers, and teachers regarding literacy policy (Mills, 2011). Coburn (2006) explored framing in the context of teachers and new literacy policies as well. Further, Slegers, Wassink, van Veen, and Imants (2009) examined how professional biographies and professional careers affect how two beginning school leaders made sense of and framed problems they encountered. Cognitive frames have also been used to explain differential outcomes of underrepresented college students (Bensimon, 2005).

One framing study analyzed different frames used by two community college presidents in relation to communication campus goals and strategies and the impact it had on campus sense-making (Eddy, 2003). Likewise, Bensimon (1989) explored a number of frames used by different community college and university presidents to define the meaning of good presidential leadership amongst administrators.

Rather than solely focusing on policies or problems, examining how Latina/o parents and policymakers describe the value and purpose of college, who belongs in college, and explanations for the lack of college access for Latinas/os will allow for the emergence of deep understandings or “cognitive frames” because a more complete picture of their college ideas can be advanced. Any findings about the deep values and understandings held regarding higher education will be important because it can influence school practices and educational policy systems.

Instead of focusing on the common good, past studies that have examined understandings about the purpose of education have found that the public sees education as serving the individual and also that individuals (such as parents) are held responsible for educational

outcomes (Chart & Kendall-Taylor, 2008; Bales, 2010). Chart and Kendall-Taylor (2008) conducted a study where involved citizens, those with a strong interest in current events and actively involved in their communities, in New England and California were interviewed regarding their understandings about education. They found that respondents talked about a mentalist model where issues were attributed to motivation or the family-bubble model where educational problems were explained by blaming parents (Chart & Kendall-Taylor, 2008). These results are of consequence because cognitive frames can affect the educational attitudes that the public has for educational reforms (Simon & Davey, 2010). Another study examined the thoughts of 50 influential Californians and found that when talking about college they explained their ideas about who should go to college using cognitive frames that included "equity, choice, and differentiation." The influential Californians were legislators or state policymakers, business or industry leaders, civic leaders, educational equity advocates, and educational policy experts. Equity referred to the participants' desire for all students to be prepared for college, choice referred to the participants' desire for students to have the choice to attend college, and differentiation referred to participants' desire for students differentiated pathways for college-bound and non-college bound students (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). These same Californians felt that California schools did not offer the same opportunities for students to develop valued knowledge, skills, and understandings (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). Some of these values for education included critical thinking, civic education, and a broad array of knowledge and skills (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012).

### **Critical Race Theory and Color-blindness**

Using cognitive framing to assess Latina/o parent and policymaker's college-related ideas can be bolstered by including a racial analysis. There is a racialized gap in college

attainment whereby Latinas/os are not graduating with college degrees in proportion to their overall population numbers. Exploring the notion of college in relation to Latinas/os without commenting on how race affects cognitive framing would leave out this important point of analysis. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is one way to analyze how race affects cognitive framing. The basic tenets of CRT include: 1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism where race is at the center of educational racial analysis while other types of subordination such as gender and class are also considered; 2) the challenge to dominant ideology where prevailing educational ideas regarding topics such as objectivity, meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender neutrality, and equal opportunity are challenged to determine whether or not they privilege a dominant group in the United States; 3) the commitment to social justice where CRT promotes social justice and an end to racism by helping to abolish racism and other types of subordination such as that which is based on gender and class; 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge where the experiences of women and people of color play a critical role in understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in education; and 5) the transdisciplinary perspective that analyzes race and racism in education by placing this examination in a historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods (Solórzano, 1998).

Much like CRT, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva aims to uncover racism by interrogating ideas regarding race in his research. Specifically, Bonilla-Silva explores color-blind racist ideologies to uncover racism. Color-blind racism is when White people state that they do not consider someone's race but then act in ways that do not align with this idea (Bonilla-Silva, 2003/2014). It is important to note that Bonilla-Silva found instances of color-blind racism amongst non-White people, although that was not the focus of his research. Bonilla-Silva (2003/2014) lists several

frames of color-blind racism including: 1) abstract liberalism, 2) cultural racism, 3) naturalization of racial matters by likening them to a natural occurrence, and 4) minimization of racism and discrimination. These are key ideas to consider in examining the cognitive frames of Latina/o parents and policymakers regarding college. Bonilla-Silva's notion of frames resonates with that of Lakoff (2006) because he is trying to uncover hidden racial attitudes. Uncovering the hidden or unconscious understandings about race tie into the idea behind the unexamined and habitual nature of cognitive frames.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my study is to examine how Latina/o parents and policymakers frame ideas about college such as the value and purpose of college, who belongs in college, and explanations for the gaps in college completion for Latinas/os. The study will also investigate any similarities between how Latina/o parents view college compared to the policymakers in the study. A second layer of the study will examine what sources have influenced Latina/o families and policymakers regarding their conceptualizations of college. I analyze these frames using selected elements of strategic frame analysis, Critical Race Theory, and the dominant frames used in color-blind racism.

The use of elements of strategic frame analysis is particularly important. Strategic Frame Analysis is a method developed by the FrameWorks Institute to uncover cognitive frames in various individuals and groups in the policy arena (FrameWorks, 2014). Findings should highlight frames that each group uses around college. All of the elements of Strategic Frame Analysis include content analysis of media news media, cognitive interviews, peer discourse analysis, expert interviews, field frame analysis, mapping the gap conceptual analysis, and an explanatory metaphor development (FrameWorks, 2014). Certain elements of Strategic Frame

Analysis, such as cognitive interviews and expert interviews, aim to capture how people think and reason through critical social issues thereby illuminating the cognitive frames of study participants.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) What are Latina/o parents' cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?
- 2) What are policymakers cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?
- 3) Do the members of each of these groups have important conceptual framing similarities or differences?

### **Methods**

**Participants:** For my study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 immigrant Latina/o parents and eight policymakers who lived or were representatives for constituents from a large metropolitan area in Southern California. My semi-structured interviews were conducted in the selected area. Parents in the study had children who will be first generation college goers. Policymakers that are representing the interests of Latina/o parents and students in the selected geographic region as well as statewide policy interests were interviewed. Policymakers in this study include high-ranking officials in the district who have a leadership role related to curriculum and college access, elected representatives for the District, and the staff of local or statewide legislative representatives.



**Selection of Participants:** Latina/o immigrant parent participants were selected through contacts with high school principals and recruitment was done in public spaces. These spaces included in front of the school at a Back to School Night, a football game, and a supermarket. Latina/o parent participants were given a small incentive for participating. Policymakers were selected because they represent the areas where the participants live. Letters describing the study and an invitation to participate were sent to each policymaker and follow-up phone calls were made. One policymaker was a referral.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** I used elements of strategic frame analysis for my study. The elements of strategic frame analysis that I used include semi-structured cognitive interviews, expert interviews, and mapping the gap conceptual analysis (Frameworks Institute, 2014). The cognitive interviews were semi-structured one on one interviews conducted with immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers. These interviews were conducted with the aim of capturing each of these groups thinking regarding college. The FrameWorks Institute (2014) described cognitive frames as cultural models or implicit shared understandings and assumptions that groups have. Next, expert interviews with policymakers were conducted to better understand how these frames about college differ from those of the general public, in this case, Latina/o parents. Lastly, a mapping the gap conceptual analysis was completed to identify the differences or similarities within and between immigrant Latina/o parents, and policymakers. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and placed into a coding program used to analyze qualitative data (Dedoose, 2015).

### **Significance**

Cognitive framing creates understandings about college upon which people can base their actions. How Latina/o parents understand college can affect their college-related actions. How

policymakers frame college can influence how they make important policy decisions or frame messaging regarding college. These cognitive frames may further illuminate if Latina/o conceptions of college are related to gaps in college attainment and if policymakers understanding of college may contribute to this gap as well.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **College Access and Latinas/os**

In the past three decades, the percentage of young adults enrolled in postsecondary education has grown. One longitudinal study comparing 1974 to 2006 outcomes found that the rates of postsecondary enrollment two years after students' senior year of high school has increased from 40% in 1974 to 62% in 2006 (Ingels, Glennie, Lauff, & Wirt, 2012). Although Latinas/os saw a 28% increase in postsecondary enrollment, they still had the lowest enrollment (50%) when compared to Blacks, Asians, and Whites (Ingels, Glennie, Lauff, & Wirt, 2012). In spite of an upward trend in postsecondary enrollment, Latinas/os still lag behind other racial and ethnic groups when it comes to accessing college. Additionally, most of the growth seen from 1974 to 2006 happened in two-year versus four-year colleges (Ingels, Glennie, Lauff, & Wirt, 2012). The differences in enrolling in two-year colleges versus four-year college become important when it comes to another vital aspect of college access-completion of a four-year degree. Enrolling in two-year colleges rather than enrolling in four-year colleges can lead to lower rates of Bachelor's degree attainment (Martinez & Fernández, 2004). In California, Latinas/os are more likely to enroll in two-year versus four-year colleges and less likely to earn Bachelor's degrees (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). More specifically, while the Latina/o college-aged (18-24 year old) population is 46.7% of Californians, only 20.4% are enrolled in the University of California school system, 32.8% are enrolled in the California State University system, and 38.7% are enrolled in community college (Campaign For College Opportunity, 2013). This same report puts the Latina/o rate of acquiring Bachelor's degrees at 10.7%, compared to 39.3% of Whites in California.

The growing importance of higher education in the United States and the comparatively low levels of college enrollment and graduation of Latinas/os highlight the disparities that exist in Latina/o educational attainment. Several studies have examined what is behind these outcome differentials. These studies have focused on several reasons for Latinas/os not accessing and completing college including family, achievement, school conditions, college counseling, financial aid, and college knowledge. For example, family factors were examined by Nuñez & Kim (2012) who analyzed the 2002 Education Longitudinal Study and NCES Common Core of Data (CCD) and found that students who had parents involved in their college planning were 75% more likely to enroll in a four-year college. Moreover, they discovered that Latinas/os enrolled in advanced math courses were 45 times more likely to enroll in a four-year college (Nuñez & Kim, 2012). In terms of academic achievement, one study found that for the 2003-2004, while 33% of White students had taken at least one AP test, only 25% of Latinas/os had taken one and while 49% of White students met ACT college readiness benchmarks, only 25% of Latinas/os met these same benchmarks (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). Moreover, forty percent of White students and only 20% of Latinas/os met the criteria for another measure of college readiness that included basic literacy skills, graduation from high school, and completion and passage of college preparatory course requirements (Roderick et al., 2009).

Meanwhile, Oakes, Valladares, Renée, Fanelli, Medina, and Rogers (2007) discovered that Latinas/os experienced unequal schooling conditions that affected their college access. Specifically, 65% of Latinas/os in California were in schools where there weren't enough college preparatory classes for all students to engage in a college preparatory curriculum (Oakes et al., 2007). College preparatory coursework is important for Latina/o students because as Nuñez and Kim (2012) point out, without the proper coursework many Latina/o students can't enroll in

four-year colleges. Another study completed in Chicago high schools found that Latinas/os struggled with managing the college application process and that their college planning behaviors were affected by their teachers and counselors (Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, & Moeller, 2008). Additionally, a national survey of Latina/o parents and young adults revealed that there is a lack of information about what financial aid is available for college (Zarate & Pachon, 2006). Once in college, Latinas/os are more likely than non-Latinas/os to report that insufficient finances and lack of academic ability are primary reasons for not persisting to graduation. In one study, where 175 first-year Latina/o students attending a research university were surveyed, 18.7% of Latinas/os cited that a likely cause of college departure was their families inability afford college, compared to 12.5% of non-Latina/o students (Longerbeam, Sedlacek, & Alatorre, 2004). Additionally, 4.7% of Latina/o students identified lack of academic ability as a reason for departure compared to 1.6% of non-Latinas/os (Longerbeam et al., 2004).

### **What is College and Who Belongs There?**

Defining college is a complex process because of the variety of higher institutions of education in existence. Bok (2015) described research universities, comprehensive universities, four-year colleges, community colleges, and for-profit institutions as constituting the higher education system in the United States. Latina/o parents know about local universities and the Ivy Leagues, but know little about other types of colleges (Kiyama, 2010). In fact, Latina/o parents frequently cited general information about the university and college system as one of their learning needs while engaged in a series of college workshops (Fann, Jarsky, & McDonough, 2009). Furthermore, information about different colleges was useful for Latina/o parents because for some it was the first time that they realized there were so many colleges available for their children to attend (Fann et al., 2009). Latina/o students are unaware of the numerous types of

colleges available to them. While Latinas/os can rely on social networks of family, siblings, and peers to get college information, it may limit their knowledge about broader possibilities for college (Perez & McDonough, 2008).

There are several ideas about who belongs in college. One study of fifty influential Californians found that many don't believe in college for all although they do talk about the idea of college being available for everyone (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). This study included legislators or state policymakers, business or industry leaders, civic leaders, educational equity advocates, and educational policy experts (Rogers et. al., 2012). Of all 50 participants, 20 reported that all students should be prepared for college while 28 disagreed with this point of view and reported that it should be a choice for students or that students should be prepared for distinct futures (Rogers et. al., 2012) These responses show that a majority of the study's influential Californians don't believe that college is for everyone.

In contrast, polling is clear that most Latina/o parents believe that their children should go to college (Pew Hispanic Center, 2004; Taylor et al., 2011). Meanwhile, although Latina/o students would like to go to college many do not enroll or enroll in less selective colleges. One study found that almost half of Latinas/os applied to colleges whose selectivity levels below those they were qualified for (Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, & Moeller, 2008). This "mismatch" in qualifications was greatest among Latinas/os when compared to the other racial and ethnic groups in the study (Roderick et al., 2008).

### **Latina/o Parent Engagement Regarding College**

Parental support for college is important for Latina/o students. Parents use whatever resources they have available to influence their children to pursue college. For example, factors such as artifacts and symbols (college ring, cap and gown, etc.), social networks, and individual

experiences can influence families' educational ideologies regarding college (Kiyama, 2010). Moreover, parents who support their children to achieve academically do this by "having a strong commitment to the importance of education, parental facilitation of their child's autonomy, and an array of nonverbal, parental expressions" (Ceballo, 2004, p. 171). Meanwhile, college access programs for parents can offer strategies for them to guide their children through the college application process. One bilingual outreach program was able to help parents understand steps to college, expanded college relevant social networks, and had some parents who gained confidence for intervention, advocacy, and leadership (Auerbach, 2004). Another program had parents teaching parents, where instructors delivered college and career curriculum to other parents and students. Parents gained knowledge regarding careers, college admissions, college testing, and financial aid (Downs et al., 2008).

### **Latina/o Parent College Expectations**

Latina/o parents have high aspirations for their children. According to Kiyama (2010) one Latina/o father transmitted high college aspirations by watching college football and encouraging his daughter to check out the college marching band, thereby placing the idea of attending college in her future (Kiyama, 2010). In this same study, where English speaking Latina/o parents in a parent outreach program were interviewed, a Latina mother was supportive of her daughter pursuing college based on where she might receive an athletic scholarship (Kiyama, 2010). Another study with Latina college students found that parents encouraged their daughters to aspire towards college by talking to them about the importance of going to college (Ceja, 2004).

Moreover, several survey demonstrate that high numbers of Latina/o parents would like for their children to go to college. A national survey of Latinas/os found that 77% of Latina/o

adults stated that their parents think that going to college is the most important thing to do after high school (Lopez, 2009). Pew (2011) also found that 94% of parents surveyed for their national study expected that at least one of their children would go to college and found no significant differences across racial or ethnic groups.

### **The Value and Purpose of College**

Public opinion surveys have been conducted with Latina/o parents and policymakers about the value of college. Although polls have mixed results, many show that Latina/o parents place a high value on college. The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) found that 94% of Latina/o parent survey respondents believed that a college education is “very important” (Zarate & Fabienke, 2007). Moreover, Gallup (2013) found that Latina/o, Asian, and African-American respondents valued college significantly more than White respondents (Gallup, 2013).

In another survey by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) 73% of Latinas/os, the highest percentage among all ethnic or racial groups, are most likely to say that success in today’s work world depends on a college education (Baldassare et al., 2011). In a more recent PPIC survey Latinas/os had the highest percentage among all ethnic or racial groups to state that the major goal of California’s K-12 education is preparing students for college (Baldassarre, Bonner, Lopes, & Petek, 2015). Baldassare et al. (2011) also found that 45% of Latinas/os stated the purpose of college is to increase skills and knowledge that can be used in the workplace. Meanwhile, when policymakers were asked about college most of what is published details the economic demands for college workers such as a report that speaks about how California will need one million more college graduates by 2025 (Johnson & Sengupta, 2009). There is much that can be learned by surveying Latina/o parents regarding their thoughts about college.



Additionally, examining where Latina/o parents receive their college information can provide insight about how Latina/o parents' understandings regarding college are influenced.

### **Sources of College Information**

Latina/o parents receive college information from numerous sources including friends and college representatives (Pérez & McDonough, 2008). A majority of Latina/o youth can receive information from schoolteachers and counselors, followed by their parents and other family members or relatives (Zarate & Fabienke, 2007). This is why Latina/o parents can play an important role for their children. At times, although Latina/o parents can offer emotional and financial support for college they are not well versed in the college choice process (Ceja, 2006). In one study Latina/o immigrant parents provided moral capital to their children by stressing the value of education, working hard, and encouraging them to pursue their college aspirations (Auerbach, 2006). Latina/o parents' moral support was expressed by verbal encouragement for their children's education, cautionary tales about their own lives without a college education, and general advice (Auerbach, 2006). Another study with Latina/o college students at an Ivy League university found that parents supported their children with a general commitment to education, by asking about school project and events, and lauding their children's' academic accomplishments despite their limited educational knowledge (Ceballo, 2004). Parents also provided nonverbal support by not making their children work, making food for their study time, and prioritizing school tasks over other activities (Ceballo, 2004). Assessing how Latina/o parents and students learn about college indicates the differences that can occur within different racial and ethnic groups when speaking about college related matters. Race is of great consequence when discussing college in the United States.

### **What Does Race Have to Do with College?**

Educational attainment rates vary by race and ethnicity. Latina/o and African-Americans are underrepresented in completion of four-year college degrees, while Asian and Whites are overrepresented in those who have completed their Bachelor's degrees. This pipeline to college becomes obstructed when many Latina/o and African-American students are in high schools that do not provide the ideal conditions for them to move on to college. One study on Pablo, a Latino high school student, found that students cut class as a response to their poor education, that schools focused on vocational traits rather than college skills, and that some teachers were good and challenged students while others were bad as they held racist attitudes and didn't seem to care about student learning (Fernández, 2002). Another study showed differences in access to UCs by type of school, SES, and race/ethnicity. SES and the percentage of Asian students positively correlated with per capita admission while percentage of Black and Latina/o students inversely correlated with per capita admission (Martin et al., 2005). (Oakes et al., 2007) found that 35% of Latinas/os in California attended overcrowded schools and that 65% attended high schools with too few college preparatory courses for all students to enroll in these courses. Moreover, Latinas/os were much more likely to experience shortages in qualified teachers than White or Asian students (Oakes et al., 2007). The disparities in educational opportunities by race and ethnicity are evident. Analyzing the cognitive frames of Latina/o parents and policymakers can serve to clarify one aspect of the college process. Cognitive frames will illuminate how Latina/o parents and policymakers understand and make sense of college.

### **The Importance of Cognitive Frames**

Lakoff (2006) supports the importance of cognitive frames in politics. He builds on the seminal literature on framing by Gregory Bateson and Erving Goffman. Both Bateson (1972, 2000) and Goffman (1974) highlight how mental frames filter our understanding of the world.

Lakoff picks up on this idea that mental or cognitive frames are a key to how each of us perceives the world and as such have a large influence on politics. Lakoff makes several important distinctions about types of frames. Lakoff talks about surface frames, deep frames, messaging frames, and issue frames. Surface frames activate meaning associated with a word like the thoughts associated with the word “war” in political slogans like “the war on terror” used to describe the Iraq war. Meanwhile, deep frames are the deeply held understandings that each of us use for interpretation. Messaging frames are those that focus on how something is communicated. Lastly, issue frames occur when we focus our understanding on specific policy problems (Lakoff, 2006). Although Goffman and Bateson did not make the same distinctions as Lakoff, their ideas of deconstructing how each of us interprets the world lends itself to investigating deep frames as they are the core of our values and beliefs.

Moreover, Lakoff (2006) emphasized the unconscious nature of frames and how they define what is “common sense.” For example, the word patriotism activates different values between liberals and conservatives. For conservatives, patriotism can mean that we do not question the president or his military policies while for progressives it means using freedom to question the choices that political leaders make (Lakoff, 2006). With such different frames for patriotism it is not difficult to see that frames can limit your perspective.

Connecting cognitive frames to existing policy issues reveals important understanding on the public’s thoughts on a variety of issues. Gilliam and Bales (2001) describe framing as, “how messages are encoded with meaning so that they can be efficiently interpreted in relationship to existing beliefs or ideas” (p.3). Using strategic frame analysis they uncover dominant frames of understanding as well as how media frames affects these prevailing ways of understanding (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). This distinction points to an important dichotomy in the literature of

frames. Frames can be used to describe how something is messaged or it can describe how something is understood. How something is understood is central to cognitive frames, while messaging frames have to do with word choice to elicit these understandings. In one study Gilliam and Bales (2001) used strategic frame analysis to understand America's attitudes about teenagers as well as any policy implications of these findings. They found that adults think negatively about youth and that when subjected to a news story on young people, adults chose to overlook any mention of the positive aspects of the youth (Gilliam & Bales, 2001). In another study, Gilliam & Inyengmar (2005) investigated how the news media's use of race-related and gang-related language to describe crime influences suggested policy solutions. They presented research subjects with news stories that differed only in whether the criminals were depicted as Black or White criminals and whether the crime was perpetrated by gangs (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2005). One significant finding was that the recall for suspects who were African American or Latina/o was greater than for Whites or Asians suggesting that there were some preconceived leanings towards these suspects being Black or Latina/o (Gilliam & Inyengmar, 2005). Additionally, the punitiveness assigned for the crime was significantly lower if the suspect was Asian or White (Gilliam & Iyengmar, 2005). These findings demonstrate that message framing in the news can activate unconscious beliefs about race and crime.

### **Cognitive Frames in Education and Policy**

There are numerous examinations of cognitive frames within education. In one study, frame analysis derived from social movement theorists, talked about collective action, was problem-focused, examined frames resulting from social interactions, and interrogated how frames were used to influence others' understandings to mobilize them to action (Coburn, 2006). In this study, framing explored how teachers reasoned through problems with literacy and in the

context of new literacy policies (Coburn, 2006). For example, in one instance teachers were asked to give reasons for the reading difficulties of students and several answered from a student and family deficit perspective (Coburn, 2006). Another study by Mills (2001) examined frames by policymakers, head teachers, and teachers when understanding literacy. Five different frames for understanding policy emerged amongst the varied actors (Mills, 2011). In addition, another study examined how professional biographies and professional career affect how two beginning school leaders made sense of and framed problems they encountered (Slegers, Wassink, van Veen, & Imants, 2009). An important distinction is made between problem framing and sense-making. Problem framing is how the leaders in the study understood the problem and sense-making took into account factors such as their professional career and professional biography that influenced how these teachers made sense of the problems they faced everyday (Slegers et al., 2009).

While limited cognitive framing has been explored in research about higher education. Here I present a few studies that do so. In one study, different messaging frames used by two community college presidents were examined in relation to campus goals and strategies and the impact it had on campus sense-making (Eddy, 2003). In this instance, Eddy (2003) focuses on what meanings the community college presidents communicated rather than how they made sense of what they were communicating. Frames are described as the “choice of one set of meanings over another by the president” which resonates with the cognitive frame literature because it speaks to how meaning diverges based on the frames for understanding that individuals use. Still, Eddy (2003) doesn’t delve into the deeply held values or understandings of presidents, but rather focused on a more surface level analysis of campus goals, understanding, and how this affected the campus. Another study looked at the number of frames used by

different community college and university presidents to define the meaning of good presidential leadership amongst administrators (Bensimon, 1989). Cognitive frames are also used to explain differential outcomes for underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. These frames include deficit, diversity, and equity (Bensimon, 2005). The deficit frame relies on the culture of disadvantage and poverty to explain differential outcomes (Bensimon, 2005). In contrast, the diversity frame highlights the need for the representation of differences to address unequal educational outcomes and the equity frame speaks to the need for changes in institutional practices and in the production of unequal outcomes of underrepresented students (Bensimon, 2005).

Studies about the purpose of education have found that the public sees education as serving the individual and also that individuals (such as parents) are held responsible for educational outcomes (Chart & Kendall-Taylor, 2008; Bales, 2010). Respondents talked about a mentalist model where issues were attributed to motivation or the family-bubble model where educational problems were explained by blaming parents (Chart & Kendall-Taylor, 2008). These results are of consequence because cognitive frames can affect educational attitudes that the public has about educational reforms (Simon & Davey, 2008). One study that examined the thoughts of 50 influential Californians found that when talking about college they framed their ideas about who should go to college using frames that included "equity, choice, and differentiation." Equity was when they wanted all students to be prepared for college, choice was when they wanted students to have the choice to attend college, and the last group of differentiation thought that students have differentiated pathways for the college-bound and non-college bound students (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). These same Californians felt that California schools did not offer the same opportunities for students to develop valued knowledge, skills, and understandings (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). Some of these values for education

included critical thinking, civic education, and a broad array of knowledge and skills (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012).

### **Racial Theory in Relation to Cognitive Frames**

In the study of cognitive framing, race is a salient issue. Especially, when studying Latinas/os and college because there is a racialized reality to the fact that Latinas/os are receiving Bachelor's degrees at much lower rates than Asian and White students. Although studies like Gilliam and Iyengar (2005) describe how people have cognitive frames that are activated by someone's race, these frames are not placed in terms of the relationship to dominant racial ideologies and structure. Critical Race Theory and color-blind racism can be used to situate the significance of race when examining cognitive frames. CRT has five basic tenets that advance: the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, challenges to dominant ideology, a commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge of women and people of color and the transdisciplinary perspective (Solórzano, 1998). Critical Race Theory emphasizes race within a dominant White U.S. social structure. When examining the cognitive frames of Latina/o parents or policymakers, it is important that we understand that Latinas/os are not the most privileged racial or ethnic group in current society and that racism can play a part in the formation of cognitive frames.

Color-blind racism occurs when White people state that they do not consider someone's race but then act in ways that does not align with this idea (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Bonilla-Silva (2003/2014) presents four frames for color-blind racism (1) abstract liberalism (2) cultural racism (3) naturalization of racial matters and (4) the minimization of racism. The frames can be used by White people and to a lesser extent non-Whites to make sense of racism in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). These are key frames that can be considered when examining cognitive

frames of Latina/o parents and policymakers regarding college. In Bonilla-Silva (2014), many of these frames emerged as he explored the race talk of White survey respondents. Color-blind racism will help to capture the nuanced discussion of race to understand the cognitive frames Latina/o parents and policymakers have regarding race.

As the literature shows, Latina/o parents have high aspirations and values for college, yet only 10.7% of Latinas/os are receiving Bachelor's degrees (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). Several reasons are given for these gaps, but less emphasis is placed on the cognitive frames that Latina/o parents have regarding college. Studies about the cognitive frames of policymakers regarding college are also less prevalent in the literature. As cognitive frames are unconscious while tied to deep values and understandings, they shape how we think and act. It is critical to explore the frames of Latina/o parents and policymakers. The key frames held by these two important educational stakeholder groups can provide insight about how deeply ingrained college notions play a role in college access



### **Chapter 3: Methods**

Latina/o parents express high college aspirations and values for their children, but very few Latinas/os are completing their college degrees (Kiyama, 2010; Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). Why is there such a difference in aspirations and college attainment for their children? Several reasons have been given for why Latinas/os are not completing college, but less research has been explored regarding cognitive frames. Framing is critical because it can radically change how one assigns meaning to something. Using cognitive interviews one can uncover the unexamined beliefs and understandings that Latina/o parents have regarding college. Policymakers understanding can be explored as well since they have a crucial say in what college access policies are created that affect Latinas/os. Although several surveys have attempted to capture these ideas they are too broad to capture the diversity and dominant deep beliefs of Latina/o parents or policymakers regarding college. For this reason the purpose of my study was to identify the cognitive frames regarding college that emerge among Latina/o parents and policymakers. This section describes the methods that were used to collect data regarding the cognitive frames for Latina/o parents and policymakers for this study. First, the research questions are discussed. Second, the research design is explained. Third, details are given about the study's sample and site selection. Fourth, information about the recruitment of participants is given. Fifth, data collection and analysis methods are enumerated. Sixth, the limitations and validity of the study are presented. Last, the positionality of the researcher is explained. For this study qualitative semi-structured interviews allowed me to uncover deep understandings about college that methods such as surveys would not. The research questions I asked were as follows:

- 1) What are Latina/o parents' cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?

What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?

- 2) What are policymakers cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?
- 3) Do the members of each of these groups have important conceptual framing similarities or differences?

### **Research Design**

For my study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 Latina/o immigrant parents, and eight policymakers in a large metropolitan area in Southern California. Parents in the study lived in the same area, were born in another country, had never attended college, and had high school aged children who participated in the Free or Reduced Lunch Program. Policymakers were selected because they represented the interests of Latina/o parents and students in the selected geographic region and statewide policy interests. This includes high-ranking officials in the district who have a leadership roles related to curriculum and college access, elected representatives for the District, and local and statewide staff for elected representatives.

Semi-structured interviews are deductive because they allow researchers to be sensitive to what participants are saying while at the same time allowing for them to test the constructs of a theory (Brenner, 2006). Specifically, I wanted to find emergent frames regarding college from each participant. An added racial analysis was conducted by creating questions to elicit racialized points of view as described by Critical Race Theory and Color-Blind Racism. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask all participants the same core questions while leaving space to ask follow-up questions based on the responses of participants (Brenner, 2006).

#### *Interviews Latina/o Immigrant Parents*

When I interviewed Latina/o parents I was certain to make the protocol available to them in either English or Spanish. Most of my interviews were in Spanish since all of the parents I interviewed were immigrant parents. Additionally, I made certain to interview parents in a comfortable and convenient space. Moreover, I offered gift cards worth ten dollars to incentivize participation. Furthermore, I reassured participants of their confidentiality during this process as some had concerns with their identities being revealed (such as those who are undocumented although I did not ask any questions related to documentation status) (Umaña-Taylor & Bámaca, 2004).

#### *Interviews with Policymakers*

When conducting interviews with policymakers I sent a letter beforehand so that they would have a general understanding about my study. As suggested in Aberbach and Rockman (2002), who studied elites, a letter was sent to policymakers that described the study and interviewing process. All policymakers in the study were selected because they were policymakers that represented the interests of students and parents in the metropolitan region where I based my study. Policymakers included high-ranking officials in the District who have leadership roles related to curriculum and college access, elected representatives for the District, and local and statewide staff for elected representatives. Additionally, policymakers, such as elected officials, were very difficult to schedule interviews with and many required much follow-up. I conducted interviews over the phone and in person at the policymakers' offices or other selected locations.

#### **Site and Sample Selection**

The geographic region selected for the study was chosen because it has a large population of Latina/o residents who were low-income and have not finished college. Lastly, I have

extensive relationships, previous to my time in graduate school and during my time in graduate school, with community-based organizations in this geographic region that facilitates the recruitment of participants for my study. Policymakers were selected because they represent the areas where the participants live and based on any networks that my committee chair connected me with.

### *Profile of Metropolitan Region*

In the selected region where participants came from 91.2% of inhabitants are Latina/o and 5.1% of residents 25 and older have a four-year degree (Local Newspaper, 2014). The median household income is \$33,235. Out of 272 neighborhoods in Metropolitan County it ranks 240 where 1 is the wealthiest neighborhood and 272 is the poorest neighborhood (Local Newspaper, 2014). Of the Latinas/os in this neighborhood, 52.4% are immigrants, which is considered high for the city where it is located and high for the county (Local Newspaper, 2014). Mexico (87.7%) and El Salvador (4.5%) are the most common countries of origin (Local Newspaper, 2014).

### *Profile of the Metropolitan District*

Most students that live in the metropolitan region where I conducted my study attend schools in the \*Metropolitan Unified School District<sup>2</sup>. In MUSD, 74% of high school students are Latina/o (MUSD, 2014). Furthermore, MUSD has 66% of high school students graduate in four years while 35% of graduates graduate completing the A-G college preparatory requirements and 35% of high school students are on track to graduate A-G ready (MUSD, 2014). Seventy-five percent of high school students surveyed plan to attend some type of postsecondary education (MUSD, 2014). Although students have high aspirations, little more than half of

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonym to protect identity of study participants

students are graduating and less than half of students are on track to or are completing a college preparatory curriculum. Since MUSD is largely Latina/o there are significant implications of these statistics for the educational outcomes for Latinas/os in metropolitan cities. Additionally, this provides a helpful context about the kinds of academic outcomes that exist at the high schools where the children of Latina/o parent participants attend.

Another recent report shows how Latinas/os fare in MUSD compared to other racial and ethnic groups. The report found that 57% of Latinas/os entering high school in the Fall of 2007 graduated in four years, compared to 82% of Asian students and 67% of White students (Saunders, Ventura, & Flores-Valmonte, 2013). Of these graduates, only 17% of Latinas/os had fulfilled the college preparatory requirements necessary to be eligible for a California four-year college as compared to 34% of Asians and 26% of Whites (Saunders et al., 2013). Unfortunately, Latinas/os are not graduating high school or being prepared for college at the same rates as other racial and ethnic groups in MUSD. It is in this educational context that we situate our Latina/o student and parent participants.

### **Recruitment of Participants**

In order to recruit Latina/o participants I contacted a high school principal that my Committee Chair knew in the region I was studying. I then attended school related events at this high school to recruit parents. These events included a Back to School night and a football game. They were in public spaces and did not interfere with instructional time. Additionally, I visited neighborhood churches and I set up a recruitment table at a local supermarket. Latina/o parents were given gift cards with a small amount of money for their participation in the study. All parent participants who were recruited were given a short anonymous questionnaire to make certain that they meet the income and educational criteria for the study. Criteria included: a)

having at least one child presently enrolled in a local public high school, b) having not completed college themselves, c) being low-income d) being a Latina/o that was not born in this country and e) living in the geographic region where my study was based. To recruit policymakers I wrote letters explaining my study, followed by emails, and phone calls to make certain that I had exhausted all forms of communication to reach them. I also leveraged the networks of my committee Chair's extensive experience studying and working with policymakers in the metropolitan region where my study was based. I reached out to seven District officials and representatives and six agreed to participate in my study. I also reached out to seven local and state representatives and two agreed to participate in my study.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

I used elements of strategic frame analysis for my study. The elements of strategic frame analysis that I used included cognitive interviews, expert interviews, and mapping the gap conceptual analysis (FrameWorks Institute, 2014). The cognitive interviews were semi-structured one on one interviews conducted with Latina/o parents and policymakers. These interviews were conducted with the aim of understanding the ways that each of these groups understand various ideas regarding college. The FrameWorks Institute (2014) describes these as cultural models or implicit shared understandings and assumptions that groups have. Next, expert interviews with policymakers were conducted to better understand how these frames about college differ from those of the general public, in this case, Latina/o parents. Lastly, a mapping the gap conceptual analysis served to see what differences or similarities occur within and between Latina/o parents and policymakers. The questions I asked centered on how college is defined, the value and purpose of college, who belongs in college, college-related actions and decisions, and the college access challenges for Latinas/os (see Appendix A). Within these,

college profiles, vignettes, articles, and charts were used to help elicit the cognitive frames regarding college of participants.

During the interviews, I used a recording device and took notes to make certain to accurately capture the information. All interviews were transcribed and placed into Dedoose, a coding program that codes qualitative and quantitative data. I analyzed the transcripts to find any patterns and emerging themes in the data.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study include using a small sample size, which decreases the generalizability of the research findings. The intent of this study is to get a sense of deep understandings and conceptualizations of college, which calls for the interview method with a smaller group of participants. Perhaps a follow-up study could further explore these conceptualizations at a more general level to capture a larger picture of the cognitive frames of Latina/o parents and policymakers. Another limitation is that the Latina/o parents and policymakers sampled are from specific metropolitan region in Southern California so the study will not capture the variety in neighborhoods across the region. As far as policymakers, it is helpful to policymakers that work with or represent regions with similar demographics as their thinking about college may be affected by similar issues.

### **Validity**

I employed several methods to ensure the validity of my interviews. First, during my analysis phase, I debriefed my coding process with the chair of my committee. This is in line with Brenner's (2006) recommendation to subject research to peer debriefing to ensure accuracy of coding except that rather than share with another student colleague, I shared the process with my committee chair (Brenner, 2006). Second, I employed evaluative validity (Eisenhart, 2006),

which refers to the kind of validity where judgment is ascribed to the responses of participants. This approach allowed me to identify and analyze responses that led to a better understanding of the values surrounding college. By describing my positionality in the research I make my point of view explicit and thus my evaluation can be placed in context.

### **Positionality of Researcher**

When interviewing, it is important to take into consideration power differentials and cultural differences between the researcher and participants (Brenner, 2006). In my case, as a doctoral student interacting with low-income Latina/o parents who do not have a college education, I can be seen as a person who holds more power. Additionally, since I asked questions and directed the conversations during my interviews I was in a place of power. My intent was to emphasize my role as a listener and to capture their stories and to speak in ways that were free of educational jargon to place families at ease. I also asked Latina/o parents to meet where they felt most comfortable.

As for similarities, as a first generation Latina college student, I can relate to many of the participants' experiences. First, I have parents who had challenges navigating the higher education system in this country. Second, as the daughter of immigrant parents I have been immersed in two cultures and speak both Spanish and English. Third, I have extensive experience convening and talking with Latina/o students and parents through my nearly five years at the Alliance for a Better Community, a community-based organization. I've also partnered with Latina/o parents and students through UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA) as part of the Communities for Public Education Reform (CPER) project.



As far as policymakers, I retain power as the researcher because I structured the questions asked during the interview. But, as far as education there will be less of a power differential. In fact, because I interviewed high-ranking educational officials they are in positions of power above mine as a graduate student. Thus, they may be wary of answering controversial questions because of the positions that they hold. In my study, there was a difference in race and ethnicity between policymakers I interviewed and I. This difference could have affected the responses that I received when it came to sensitive questions, especially those regarding race. For this reason, questions were written in a nuanced ways to try to minimize any discomfort for participants.

## Chapter 4: Immigrant Parent Findings

Latina/o parents have high educational aspirations for their children and want them to attend college (Kiyama, 2010; Pew Hispanic Center, 2004). In fact, one poll found that Latina/o parents placed significantly more value on college than White respondents (Gallup, 2013). Furthermore, in a PPIC (2012) survey 45% of Latina/os stated the purpose of college is to increase skills and knowledge that can be used in the workplace (PPIC, 2012). The literature demonstrates that a critical mass of Latina/o parents understand the importance and value of college, yet only 10.7% of Latinas/os are graduating from college (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). Although there are several factors affecting the college attendance and graduation of Latinas/os, exploring the cognitive frames regarding college of Latina/o parents can reveal the deep beliefs and understandings that parents have and may share with their children. Analyzing the frames of Latina/o parents as well as the origin of these frames can also clarify how community, structures, and policies affect the manner in which Latinas/os think about college. This information can be used to create structures and policies that encourage more Latinas/os to consider college. To examine the cognitive frames of Latina/o parents the research questions are below:

### *Research Questions*

- 1) What are Latina/o parents' cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?
- 2) What are policymakers cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and

conceptualizations?

3) Do the members of each of these groups have important conceptual framing similarities or differences?

For this study, immigrant Latina/o parents were recruited. Most immigrant parents were born in Mexico and none attended college. Eight out of 10 participants finished their highest level of education in their home country. All except one parent had their children enrolled in the Free and Reduced Lunch program (see Table 1). Most immigrant participants were females. All immigrant parents had at least one child in a public high school. Of those parents five out of 10 had children who attended magnet high schools. All immigrants lived in the same geographic region in a metropolitan area in Southern California. Of the 10 participants, five had at least one child in a community college or four-year university (see Table 1).

*Demographics of Immigrant Parents: Table 1*

	Country of Origin	Gender	No College	Highest Level of Education	Country Where Attended School	Children on FRL program	Type of High School	Other Children in College
Sara	Mexico	Female	Yes	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	Mexico	Yes	Public HS	None, 1 younger child
Lorenzo	Mexico	Male	Yes	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Mexico	Unsure ***	Public HS	3 children. Only college age child is working.
Alejandra	Mexico	Female	Yes	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	U.S.	Yes	Public Magnet	None, 1 younger child and other child school not mentioned
Ana	Mexico	Female	Yes	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Mexico	Yes	Public HS*	None, 4 children. None are college age.
Emilia	Guatemala	Female	Yes	9 <sup>th</sup> grade	Guatemala	Yes	Public Magnet	None, 7. Children. Uncertain of ages.
Jorge	Mexico	Male	Yes	11 <sup>th</sup> grade. GED.	Mexico and U.S.	Yes	Public Magnet	4 children, 2 college aged went to college. 1 went to 4 year
Elena	Mexico	Female	Yes	6 <sup>th</sup> grade	Mexico	Yes	Public HS	5 children. 4 of 5 went to 4 yr, CC, or OC
Esperanza	Mexico	Female	Yes	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Mexico	Yes	Public HS	4 children. 2 college age and no college mentioned,

								and 1 in 4 yr
Paulina	Mexico	Female	Yes	6 <sup>th</sup> grade	Mexico	Yes	Public Magnet	5 children, Only college age child is in CC
Miranda	Mexico	Female	Yes	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	Mexico	Yes	Public Magnet	3 children. 1 in CC and other college aged child is working

\*Other children attend high school that requires admission or private school

\*\*4 yr: four-year college or university, CC=Community College, OC=Occupational Center

\*\*\* Even though participant unsure of FRL status he does live in a zip code where high % low-income and public hs that one of his daughters attends is high % FRL.

\*\*\*\*All names of immigrant parents are pseudonyms to protect their identity.

### Defining the College Experience and College

All immigrant parents in the study viewed college as a positive place for their children.

Parents were asked to picture a college and discuss what came to mind. Since none of them attended college six out of 10 referred to the colleges that their children or family members attended, were currently attending, or wanted to attend. Ana said:

Pues son varias, ¿verdad? Es que quisiera que mis hijos participaran pero pues la que mejor les corresponda, es una, en la que tú estás, que también es UCLA, que también tengo una sobrina que comparte ahí también. También le digo que pues es difícil pero todo ese sueño de cualquier papá, que sus hijos vayan a una universidad y le digo a la más chiquita que vaya a Harvard, ¿verdad? Le digo, “Ve a Harvard.”

Well there are many, right? It’s because I would like my children to participate in the one that best corresponds to them, it’s like the one where you attend, that is UCLA too, and I also have a niece that attends there as well. Also, I tell her it’s difficult, but that’s the dream of any parent is that their children go to college and I tell my youngest that she should go to Harvard, right? I tell her, “Go to Harvard.”

Paulina shared:

Pues, yo me imagino como Northridge, mi hijo estudiando como doctorado que era lo que él quería...

Well, I imagine Northridge, my son studying for a doctorate, which is what he wanted...

Parents also verbalized their own general ideas of what a college is like without relating to a specific college. Esperanza said:

Pues yo me imagino un gran futuro. Me imagino una gran escuela. Mucho trabajo, pero al final es para un beneficio.

I imagine a grand future. I imagine a grand school. A lot of work, but at the end its beneficial.

Meanwhile, Lorenzo shared:

Pues veo muchos estudiantes contentos, que van a estudiar alegres, con ganas de superarse y hacer algo para la vida. Y yo veo a mi hija y apoyándola y en todo lo que ella necesite si ella va a la universidad. Es lo que veo.

Well, I see many happy students who are happy when they go to study, with the desire to succeed and do something for life. And I see my daughter and supporting her in everything she need if she attends college. That's what I see.

The parents that discussed anything related to their own experience or initial thoughts about college specified qualifications or the skills and knowledge that their children would gain or did gain in college. Jorge shared:

Buenas, se aprende mucho y se crece mucho. Con la experiencia de mis dos hijas que ya fueron, especialmente la que fue a los cuatro años, la universidad es así – fue muy buena, muy buena; se aprende mucho y crecen mucho las personas.

Good, you learn a lot and you grow a lot. With the experience of my two daughters that attended, especially the one that went to a four-year, college is like that-it was very good, very good; you learn a lot and people grow a lot.

Another mother, Miranda said:

Sí, es que como mi hija quiere ir a Cal State, porque ahí tienen un programa bueno para Social Worker, ella está estudiando para eso, entonces ahí tienen un programa muy bueno.

Yes, because my daughter wants to attend a Cal State because they have a good program for Social Workers, she is studying for that, and they have a very good program.

### **Quality of College**

In comparing one college to another, there are several attributes that can be weighed. Indicators of college quality can include student to faculty ratio, student selectivity, SAT scores, graduation rates, and financial resources (Black and Smith, 2004; U.S. News and World Report, 2015). Even though Latina/o parents in the study have not attended college many had some sense

that certain colleges were better than other colleges. In fact, six out of nine<sup>3</sup> immigrant parents thought that some colleges were better than others (see Table 3). When speaking about differences, some parents described a more general notion of colleges being better than others while others pointed out indicators of quality such as prestige and quality of professors. In speaking of what colleges are better Esperanza said:

No sé, pienso que sí, entre más - he escuchado que niveles, entre más nivel tiene el joven, universidades mejores los piden.

I don't know, I think that yes, where there are higher-I've heard of levels-where the young person has higher levels, better universities ask for higher levels.

While Elena stated:

Porque, muchos niños se van a otra parte, otras universidades mucho más mejores, y – pero, lejos de, de la familia, de los papas.

Because, for many children, they go somewhere else, other universities, much better universities, and-but far away, from the family and parents.

Emilia described the importance of prestige in defining what colleges are better:

Pues yo pienso que depende – a veces la universidad es eso del prestigio que tienen, por el prestigio que tiene, como muchos dicen: “Oh, pues vamos a ir al UCLA”, o si no a otras – vamos a suponer Harvard, o MIT. ¿Por qué? Por el prestigio que tienen. Pero a veces es el enfoque que tengan los estudiantes de seguir estudiando, y que pongan el empeño ellos de querer hacerlo, porque cualquier universidad te va a dar – pero como siempre he dicho, el prestigio de la universidad es lo que mucho cuenta a veces.

Well I think it depends-at times for college it's about the prestige that they have, like many say, “Oh let's go to UCLA,” or if not other-let's say Harvard or MIT. Why? Because of the prestige they have. But at times it's the focus that the students have to keep studying, and that they put to do it, because whatever university will give-but as I've always said that prestige counts for a lot at times.

The remaining three parents said that colleges were not better or were unsure whether or not colleges were better (see Table 3). Jorge said:

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<sup>3</sup> Nine out of 10 parents answered the question about what colleges are better

Son mejores yo creo que en nombre y en exigencia, porque al final todas las universidades son iguales; pero me imagino que las más grandes tienen un nombre más grande para cuando se gradúan, al poner ese nombre, pues se vea mejor, ¿no? Pero yo pienso que al final cualquiera que sea universidad, enseña lo mismo y se gradúan de lo mismo, ya sea Cal State, ya sea UCLA, ya sean las privadas; para mí son iguales, excepto en el nombre que traen en el papel cuando digan dónde fueron.

I think they are better in name and in requirements but at the end all of them are the same; but I imagine that the biggest ones have a bigger name when they graduate, in putting that name, well it looks better, no? But I think that at the end whichever college is the same and you graduate the same, be it a Cal State or UCLA, be it private colleges' for me they are the same, except the name that they have and the paper that says where you went.

Another parent Ana focused on the student mattering more than the college:

Bueno, yo pienso que quizás no es que sean mejores o que no sean mejores algunas, pero yo pienso que es la capacidad de cada niño donde quiera que se desempeñe y que quiera seguir estudiando y sobresalir en cualquier carrera que él decidiera hacer.

Well, I think that perhaps it's not that some are better or not better, but I think that it's the capacity of each child wherever they build it and that they want to keep studying and excel in whatever career they pursue.

To further examine college quality, immigrant parents were asked about the different types of colleges they would want their children and the children in their neighborhood to attend. Parents had to consider college quality as they chose colleges for their children or neighbors. Immigrant parents were asked to consider college frames as parents and later as community members. When immigrant parents were asked what colleges they wanted their children to attend seven out of 10 chose four-year colleges (see Table 3). The remaining three parents said that it depends or any college would work well. It appears that most immigrant parents think of a four-year college when asked about what would work best for their child. For many parents these are colleges where other children or family attended. Several parents identified local colleges in the UC system and the CSU system. Ana, also identified Ivy League colleges:

Es un poco pues complicado a veces decidiera a cuál universidad quisiera que fueran sus hijos. Yo quisiera que fueran a las mejores, una que es donde tú estás, UCLA, otra pues es como te dije, Harvard. También me gustaría que alguno tuviera el interés de ir y la

capacidad de poder asistir ahí. Hay muchas, como también Georgetown, también Yale, se pronuncia, no sé si se pronuncie Yale.

It's a little complicated sometimes to decide what university you would like your children to attend. I would like them to go to the best, like the one where you are, UCLA, another is like I said before, Harvard. I would like one of them [children] to have the interest and capacity to attend there. There are many, such as Georgetown, also Yale, I don't know if you pronounce it Yale.

Esperanza explained how she learned about the quality of the college that her daughter attends and where she would like her son to go:

Bueno, hasta que mi hija entró a esa escuela yo entendí que es una buena escuela. Cuando me preguntan, "¿En cuál escuela va?" "Berkeley." "Wow, esa." Entonces digo, "Okay." Pero he aprendido que está en un nivel bueno, ¿por qué? Porque yo la he visto pucharse a ella misma.

Well, until my daughter got in to that school I understood that it is a good school. When they ask me "What school does she attend?" "Berkeley." "Wow, that one." Then I say, "Okay." But I have learned this is a good level. Why? Because I have seen her push herself.

Miranda was a parent did not specify that her child should attend a four-year college. She explained:

Ay, pues la verdad, la verdad que yo para mí no importa mucho, mucho la universidad, sino que lo importante para mí es lo que lleva el intelecto mental de la persona y las ganas de superarse, porque la escuela es buena donde sea, pero lo que tiene es de las ganas que tenga aquella persona de sobresalir y de hacer sus cosas. Bueno, digo yo, porque todos tienen buenos programas, pero realmente no los aprovechan y eso, pero yo digo que todas son buenas."

Well, the truth, the truth is that for me it doesn't matter very much the university, but what is important for me is the intellect that a person has and the desire to achieve, because the school is good wherever, but what matters is the desire that the person has to excel and to do their things. Well, that's what I say. Because everyone has great programs, but realistically they don't take advantage of them and that, but I say that all are good.

Lorenzo also shared his thoughts on what a good college for his children would be, but didn't know necessarily what that would translate to:

Bueno, pues por ejemplo ella quiere ser como astronauta, astronomía y mi hija quiere ser veterinaria. Por eso quiero que ellos vayan a universidades, de veterinaria no sé, y de astronomía no sé de dónde sea.



Well, for example, she wants to be an astronaut, astronomy, and my daughter wants to be a veterinarian. That's why I want them to go to colleges, for veterinarians and I don't know, for astronomy, I don't know where that would be.

As exemplified by their own words, immigrant parents are aware that there are best and better colleges for their children. What they continue to mentally negotiate is how to define "best" and "better." When we connect this to frames regarding college we can confirm that there are definitely colleges that are better than others in parents minds. Many parents prefer to send their children to a four-year college versus a two-year college. For other parents the better college relates more to a fit for the area of study for their child. In contrast, some parents believe that the student sets the tone for their college education, regardless of the quality of the higher educational institution. Interestingly enough, parents who had children who went to college and parents who did not have any children in college or who had attended college had similar answers about certain colleges being better. Moreover, there were not significant differences across these groups of parents in the number who would send their children to four-year colleges versus other colleges. In both groups, parents with college educated children and those without college-educated children, three or four out of five would send children to a four-year college.

When parents were asked about what colleges children in the neighborhood should attend the answers were more varied. Almost half of parents, four out of 10, wanted neighbors to attend a four-year college while the remaining parents said any college, whatever is best for their career, or community college.

Paulina said:

Pues a mí me gusta UCLA porque, pues yo lo que vi es muy grande y que tiene muchas cosas, para muchos profesionales; pero mis hijos están escogiendo otras. Para mí me gustaría UCLA.

Well, I like UCLA because, I saw it and it's very big and it has many things, much for professionals; but my children are choosing others. For me, I would like UCLA.

Miranda said:

Pues a mí me gusta esa de Cal State, porque incluso ahí mi hija ha trabajado cuando summer school, ahí trabajó un tiempito, como dos meses le dieron ahí, y dijo que le gustó ahí; pero en sí, no conocemos muchas universidades.

Well I like Cal State, because my daughter has worked there during summer school, she worked there for a short time, like two months there, and she said that she liked it there, but we don't know many colleges.

Emilia shared:

Pues si pueden calificar para Cal State, o UCLA, u otras que hayan, pero siempre y cuando nuestro vecindario y nuestros hijos tengan la motivación; que nosotros como comunidad y padres, apoyemos a nuestros hijos a que ellos tienen que ir más lejos que nosotros para que no estén pasando lo que. A veces uno quiere darle tantas cosas, pero a veces no puedes como ayudarlos con libros o con cosas.

Well if they can qualify for Cal State or UCLA, or others, but only if our neighborhood and our children have motivation; that we as a community and parents support our children and that they have to go further away from us so that they don't experience. At times one wants to give them many things, but at times we can't help them with books and with things.

Sara said any college would be fine:

Pues, me gustaría que fueran todos a cualquiera, nomás con que estudiaran.

Well I would like them to go to any, as long as they study.

Another mother chose community college for neighborhood children because of its affordability. Alejandra said:

En mi neighborhood, la verdad sí can afford it, más sería (Local Community College). Es el más que hay, que puedas – si ella agarra un scholarship, I would like a better school, you know.

In my neighborhood, the truth if they can afford it, it would be (Local Community College). It's the one that there's most of-if she gets a scholarship, I would like a better school, you know.

*Different Types of College: Table 3*

	Colleges Children Attend or Attended	Colleges Better Than Others	Type of College Want Children/Family To Attend	Type of College Want Children in Neighborhood To Attend	Type of College for Children from College Profiles	Type of College Children in Neighborhood from College Profiles
Sara	None	Yes	The best, public 4 yr college	Any as long as they attend	Community College	Any
Lorenzo	None	Not sure.	Where they can study what they are interested in	Not sure, don't know what they want	Any college	The best for each student
Alejandra	None	Yes	4 yr college	Community College but if more money a better school	Community College	Community College
Ana	None	No.	Best Schools. 4 yr college	Kids can go to any college.	4yr college	4 yr college
Emilia	None	Yes	4 yr college	4 yr college	4 yr college	4 yr college
Jorge	CC & 4 yr	No	4 yr college	Any college	4 yr college	Any as long as they go
Elena	CC & 4 yr	*	It depends	4 yr college	Several children already went to college	Community College
Esperanza	4 yr	Yes	4 yr college	Any college	4 yr college	4yr college
Paulina	CC	Yes	4 yr college	4 yr college	4 yr college	4 yr college
Miranda	CC	Yes	Any college	4 yr college	Community College	Any college

\*Didn't answer the question

After reading the profiles of four specific types of colleges half of the immigrant parents indicated that they wanted their children to attend a four-year college, while three out of 10 parents wanted their children to attend community college (see Appendix B for college profiles). It is interesting to note that two parents who had previously wanted their children to attend a four-year college changed their minds to a community college once they read the profiles. These parents changed their minds because of proximity and cost. Additionally, both of these parents had never had a child in college. It is critical to note that there is more flexibility in understandings regarding college for parents who have not attended college and who do not have children in college. For these parents, frames developed regarding what college is best for their own children are likely not as extensive as those frames for parents who have had children

navigate higher education. For example, having a child from a low-income family attend a four-year college with a full-scholarship may have allayed some fears regarding the cost of higher education. Thus, making a four-year college more of an open-access institution rather than one for parents with money. Also, there are several four-year college options where students commute home, and perhaps Sara's having a child who experienced this could have deepened her understandings of community colleges versus four-year colleges or even the idea of proximity.

Sara described her reasoning for desiring proximity at a community college:

Porque están más cercas de uno... Y, uno los está vigilando. Está viendo que están yendo a la escuela y viniendo. Y, ya nomás sería 2 años que se va a la universidad, pero, ya están más con... Más centrados. Más, más centrado en lo que quieren.

Because they are closer to one... And we can watch them. We can see that they are going to school and coming. And, it would be only two years that they go to the university, but they are more... more centered. More, centered on what they want.

When asked about children in the neighborhood in relation to the college profiles four out of 10 participants chose four-year colleges, two out of 10 chose community colleges, and three out of 10 chose any type of college. It appears that parents would make similar choices for children in their neighborhood when compared to their own children when examining the profiles. After reading the profiles six out of 10 parents did not change their minds about where they would want children in their neighborhood to attend. Of the four parents who did change their minds about colleges for neighborhood children, two out of 10 parents went from wanting any college for the neighborhood children to wanting them to attend four-year colleges. Meanwhile, two other parents changed options from a four-year college to a community college or any college for other children. The change in opinion in almost half of parents is significant to note because it indicates that the frames for types of universities may not be as deep as other

frames related to college. Two key reasons this can occur is because parents in the study do not have deep understandings and experiences with varied colleges in the United States. Also, when speaking of other people's children the distance creates more ambiguity when it comes to suggesting college choices.

For the college profiles, parents were also asked to notice any difference they found between the four colleges presented. Nine out of 10 parents noticed cost, six out of 10 parents noted acceptance rates and location/dormitory options, five out of 10 parents spoke about the number of students, and two out of 10 parents pointed out graduation rates.

In line with parents' understandings about college quality, many parents are open to a variety of types of colleges children in the neighborhood should attend. Yet, when they are speaking about their own children more parents would like their children to attend a four-year college (see Table 3).

### **Who Belongs In College: Choice, Equity, and Differentiation**

Another critical frame for college involves the idea about who should go to college. Prior studies have shown that influential Californians think of who should go to college using the idea of choice, equity, and differentiation (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). Influential Californians were key staff working with Democratic and Republican legislators in the state and those that influenced their thinking on education. The frame for choice is one where students and families are given a choice to go to college. The frame for equity is that everyone should be prepared to go to college. Lastly, the frame for differentiation is that there should be differentiated paths where some students will go to college and other students will not go to college (Rogers, Bertrand, and Perez, 2012).

When immigrant Latina/o parents were asked who should go to college six out of 10 parents said that everyone should go which is the frame for equity. These parents were comprised of those who had children in college and those who didn't have children in college. This means that more than half of all parents have the equity frame, which specifies that everyone should attend college (See Table 4). Sara said:

Todos los niños...Deberían de ir...Porque es el futuro para ellos.

All the children...should go...because the future is for them.

Esperanza expressed a similar sentiment:

Yo pienso que todos deberían de ir, deberíamos de ir porque es un mejor futuro para todos, incluso hasta para todo el país.

I think that everyone should go, we should go because it is a better future for all of us, including for the entire country.

Meanwhile, other parents stated that everyone that graduates from high school should go and that it should be anyone who wants to go. These can fall into the choice frame category because it puts some limitations on who should attend college. For example, not all students have the kind of college knowledge that will lead them to “want” to apply to a university. Only two parents described student characteristics when speaking of who should go to college. These can also be placed in the choice frame because rather than being put on differentiated paths to college and jobs this speaks more to characteristics that students who attend college might have. Parents described students who want to excel and those who want to learn more. More specifically Alejandra said:

Everybody who wants to continue high school and keep learning – if you don't want to go to school then somebody else uses the time in the class so they can want to learn.

Parents described the ideal college student in a variety of ways. Two parents who stated that everyone should go to college provided such a broad characterization of the ideal student

that their answer could fit any potential student. Six out of 10 parents described ideal college students using descriptions that centered on motivation and effort. Of the two remaining parents who discussed an ideal college student, Miranda talked about those who are pursuing what they want to study and Alejandra detailed more about how an ideal college student would appear, describing the student as a “nerd.”

When participants were shown an image of two brown-skinned students, a male and a female, who were holding books and asked if this image reflected what they had thought about when they had envisioned Latinas/os in college, three parents commented that the two students in the image were very well dressed (see Appendix B for image). In responding to the the image of the Latina/o students or the idea of Latinas/os in college, nine out of 10 parents did visualize Latinas/os attending college, although four out of 10 discussed that there are not many Latinas/os in college (See Table 4). Lorenzo said:

Bueno, pues sí se me viene la imagen como estudiantes Latina/os pero me gustaría que sí fuera todo bien porque casi la mayoría de los Latina/os no sé gradúan, no van a las universidades la mayoría, son muy pocos. Bueno, yo al menos los que conozco no he visto ninguno que se gradúa. Ojalá quisiera que con mis hijos que así sea. Así verlos a ellos aquí como felices, contentos, que están - tienen confianza en sí mismos, quiero ver a los míos.

Well, yes, what comes to my mind are Latina/o students, but I would like it if everything was good because the majority of Latina/os do not graduate, a majority of them do not go to college, it’s very few that do. Well, at least that I know of there are none that graduate. Hopefully, I would like my children to. To see them happy, to have confidence in themselves, I want to see mine like that.

*Students Who Belong in College: Table 4*

	Who Should Go to College	Ideal College Students
Elena	Kids who want to excel and have the desire to do something. (Choice)	Own kids because they work hard.
Esperanza	Everyone (Equity)	Hardest working, parents pushing them matters too.
Alejandra	Those who want to continue education and keep learning (Choice)	Nerds. Those with books and glasses. Well-dressed.
Ana	Everyone (Equity)	There is none.

Paulina	Everyone that graduates from high school (Choice)	The one who finishes college and completes a master's or doctorate, someone who completes their profession, tries for a better future
Jorge	Everyone (Equity)	The one who goes to college and dedicates himself to college, has fun but graduates
Emilia	Everyone has a right to go (Equity)	Focused and puts forth effort towards their studies
Miranda	Everyone can go (Equity)	Doctors, students who study what they love
Lorenzo	Whoever wants to go (Choice)	Student who has desire and motivation to go to college. His daughter.
Sara	Everyone (Equity)	All students, but need parental support

### **Value and Purpose of College**

Latina/o parents place high importance on college (Zarate & Fabienke, 2007). When surveyed Latinas/os discuss the importance of college in relation to the job prospects that it offers their children (PPIC, 2012). In this study, immigrant Latina/o parents were also asked to speak about their thoughts regarding the value and purpose of college for their own children and for the children in their neighborhood.

Immigrant Latina/o parents were asked to give their opinions regarding two sibling profiles, where one pair of siblings was college educated with jobs that required Bachelor's degrees, while the other pair of siblings had some postsecondary training and did not have jobs that required a Bachelor's degree (see Appendix B). Most parents, nine out of 10, felt that the first pair of college-educated siblings was more successful. One of these nine did feel that all of the siblings were successful to some degree, even though the engineer was the most successful. Immigrant parents felt this way because these students completed four years of college versus the other pair of siblings that did not complete this length of schooling. Many parents mentioned that the first pair of siblings would have more job opportunities and higher salaries. Esperanza shared her thoughts on what pair of siblings was successful:

Sí, la primera pareja sí tienen éxito... porque estudiaron en universidad. [Segundo par de hermanos] No estudiaron y están en más bajas posiciones. Creo que los exitosos son los primeros.”



Yes, the first pair are successful...because they studied in the university. [Second set of siblings] Did not study and are in lower positions. I think that first ones are successful.

Alejandra was the sole parent who did not think that the first pair of siblings was more successful. She reasoned that both pairs of siblings were trying to make a living and that most likely the second pair could not afford to attend college. Alejandra stated:

Yeah, probably because they – even though they don't make a lot of money but at least they're making something and at least they went to college and got a scholarship in something that they liked they could do in less time because they couldn't afford to do more.

When immigrant parents were asked if they could name someone who had gone to college and how it had affected their lives, eight out of 10 parents could name someone who had completed a four-year college degree. Of those eight parents that knew someone with a college degree, six felt that completing a college degree had positively affected the person or people that they talked about. Parents discussed those going to college as having more money and better jobs, although some distinguished between those who received a college degree and pursued a high paying job and those who did not. Immigrant parents also talked about intellectual growth and education being what improved. Esperanza said:

Yo lo miro, se mira más alegre, se mira más movido, conoce más ciudades, tiene más cosas, si decide, "Ay, ya no quiero este carro, voy a agarrar otro." Agarra otro carro rápido. Pero su mirada está alta, su mirada está firme, como con más seguridad.

I see him, he looks happier, he is more active, he knows more cities, he has more things, if he decides "Oh, I don't want this car anymore, I'm going to get another one" he gets another one fast. But his outlook is high, his outlook is firm, with more confidence.

All parents that were interviewed said that college was important. The reasons that college was important for their own children varied according to the differences in Biesta's categories for the purpose of education, including qualification (skills), socialization (group belonging) and subjectification (developing individuality) (see Table 6). Still, the majority of parents, nine out of 10, gave reasons related to knowledge and skills their children would need

for the future (what Biesta describes as qualification) (Biesta, 2009). Many immigrant Latina/o parents felt that college was important for their children because it offered them a better future. When speaking of a better future, some parents were more specific about what this future consisted of and discussed higher salaries and better jobs. Other parents were more general about their children having a better future and did not give details about what this meant. When parent participants described a better future for their children they also expressed how this better future would not only affect their children but it would also improve the future for the families of their children.

Emilia stated how:

Porque yo pienso que la universidad son las llaves de las puertas que no son visibles, pero te van a ayudar a abrir muchas puertas, con el estudio de la universidad tú vas a poder llegar muy lejos; porque no es lo mismo el sueldo de una persona que limpia casas a una maestra o un doctor. La universidad son las llaves para que tú abras las puertas del éxito.

Because I think that college is the key to open the doors that are not visible, but it will help you open many doors, with study in college you will be able to go very far; because it's not the same the wages for a person who cleans houses or a teacher or a doctor. College is the key for you to open the door for success.

Jorge, who explained that college was important because of reasons related to

subjectification stated:

Es muy importante, porque si van a la universidad, toda su vida va a cambiar, ya no va a ser lo mismo, y ya no van a estar igual que nosotros porque tu mentalidad cambia. Tu forma de pensar cambia, eso hace que el simple hecho de ir a la universidad cambie para ti. Y para si tienes hijos, ya todo cambia.

It's very important, because if they go to college, their whole life will change, they will no longer be the same, and they will not be like us because their mentality changes. Your form of thinking changes, that makes the simple act of going to college change you. And if you have children-then everything changes.

*Reasons That College is Important for Own Children: Table 6*

	Qualification—Own Children/Family	Subjectification—Own Children/Family
Lorenzo	Better finances for them and their children. For their future.	

Sara	For their future. To get better jobs.	
Elena	Better future for them and their families. Didn't specific finances.	
Esperanza	For their own interest and for the interest of the country.	
Alejandra	Learn more and have a career that parents couldn't have.	
Ana	They experience new and different things	
Paulina	Better job and education is their legacy from their parents who aren't leaving them money	
Jorge		Form of thinking changes for you and your children.
Emilia	Better jobs and higher salaries.	
Miranda	Education will help them their whole life and it will open important doors.	

Eight out of 10 parents said that college was important for the children in their neighborhood. The reasons that parents gave for the importance of college included improving the neighborhood (e.g. culturally and economically) and also using education to keep youth off the streets and out of trouble (see Table 7). Miranda said:

Es muy importante porque así habría más profesionistas a nivel Latina/o, y me imagino yo que se pondría mejor la situación económica, mejoraría la economía con más estudiantes graduados de la Universidad.

It's very important because that way there will be more Latina/o professionals and I imagine that it will improve the economic situation; the economy would improve with more students who are college graduates.

The two parents who did not feel that college was important for the children in their neighborhood were unsure about what parents were doing for children to get them to college or if parents in the neighborhood would want their children to go to college. One of these two parents, Alejandra, stated:

I'm hoping that she wants to go, she wants to finish, so \_I could say \_\_\_ for her but not for the rest. But I can hear some people say their parents want them to go to college but that depends on the students.

*Reasons that College is Important for Children in Neighborhood: Table 7*

	Qualification	Other
Lorenzo	Less delinquency, better jobs and thoughts, safer neighborhoods, better ways of life	
Sara		Not sure if important. Kids on the streets because of parents.
Elena		Because helpful for our kids.
Esperanza	Beneficial for all of the world. They can think more positively. Better for city, better for neighborhood, everything better.	
Alejandra		Doesn't know if important for neighbors.
Ana	As a mom and person in neighborhood important for them too [as for own child].	
Paulina	Having professions will keep kids off the streets.	
Jorge	Neighborhood improves. Also brings cultural and economic change.	
Emilia	College will give them more to think about than being on the streets.	
Miranda	More Latina/o professionals and imagine economic situation will improve.	

In addition to being asked why college was important, participants were also asked to discuss the purpose of college (see Table 8). Biesta's (2009) categorization for the purpose of education including qualification, socialization, and subjectification, was used once again to sort the responses of parents. Five out of 10 parents discussed jobs when speaking about the purpose of college. Meanwhile, four out of 10 parents also expressed the purpose of college as gaining more education and the development of talents and skills. Other parents also spoke about the purpose of college in more general terms such as "for a better future." Miranda said that an education could be used to serve others. Many parents came to these conclusions through their own experiences. Elena, who was one of the parents who talked about jobs said:

El objetivo es, pues, buscar un buen trabajo pa ganar un buen, buen dinero. Y, y pues, salir adelante cuando están jóvenes y para el futuro. Después para sus hijos también.

The purpose is, well, to find a good job and earn good, good money. And, well, to progress when you are young and for the future. Afterwards, for your children too.

*Purpose of College: Table 8*

	Qualification	Subjectification
Lorenzo	Can live in a better area and get a job.	
Sara	Better in education and financially as well.	
Elena	Find a good job and earn good money. Get ahead for themselves and their children.	
Esperanza	Good job, advancement.	
Alejandra	Get diploma and have more knowledge. Motivate younger siblings.	
Ana	Support young people with talents that stand out with their abilities.	
Paulina	Search for a better future.	
Jorge	Prepare for a better life.	
Emilia	Get a college degree or doctorate.	Having more studies opens your mind and you have different perspectives.
Miranda	To have more graduates to help the economy. More taxes to help others. Doctors to help the sick.	

Parent participants were also asked about how not going to college affected their lives. Poverty was the reason that several parents did not continue their education. Five out of nine<sup>4</sup> parents also mentioned job and financial limitations that resulted from them not having a college degree. Emilia shared:

Oh, pues mucho hija, porque yo veo que sí, los estudios sí te pueden ayudar mucho, puedes ayudar mucho a tus hijos, que no es lo mismo tener un trabajo en una lavandería que si tuvieras una carrera vivieras un poco mejor, y ayudar a – ya no es tanto por lo económico, sino cómo tú puedes impactar a tus hijos, porque tu educación impacta a tus hijos también; sí, ellos ven, y a veces tú les dices: “Tienes que acabar esto”, y ellos dicen: “¿Y por qué no vas tú también?”, así tenía yo uno de mis hijos, él decía: “Pues tú también ve, para que veas que no es fácil la escuela”, ¿verdad?

Well, a lot, because I see that studies can help you a lot, you can help your children a lot, it’s not the same to have a job at a Laundromat compared to having a career that is a little bit better, and help-not so much economically, but instead how you can affect your children. Because your education impacts your children as well, they see that if you say, “You have to finish this,” they say, ‘Why don’t you go too?’ That was one of my children who said “Well you go to, so that you can see that school isn’t easy’ right?”

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<sup>4</sup> Only nine parents answered this question.

Three out of nine<sup>5</sup> parents described how if they had a college degree they may not have come to this country or would live somewhere else. Jorge stated:

Imagínate! Mira – / Primero no estuviéramos aquí...Primero, si hubiera ido a la universidad no estaría aquí, ni en este país estaría, porque si hubiera ido a la universidad estaría en México donde yo nací, donde yo estudié todo lo poquito que estudié, y hubiera ido a la universidad de México estará dedicándome de algo que estudié en la universidad de México. No, no, no, si hubiera ido a la universidad a lo mejor no tendría ni hijos, o a lo mejor tendría mis hijos, no sé, no, es todo, todo, hubiera cambiado todo.

Imagine! ...First, if I would have gone to the university I wouldn't be here, not in this country, because if I would have gone to college I would be in Mexico where I was born, where I studied, the little that I did study, and I would have gone to the University of Mexico and I would be dedicating myself to what I studied at the University of Mexico. No, if I would have gone to the university I may not have had children or perhaps I would have my children, I don't know, everything, everything it would have change everything.

Immigrant parents were also asked to read an article about a student "Isabel" who wanted to pursue her passion of Oceanography in college (see Appendix B for article excerpt). Parents were supportive of Isabela's desire to study her passion. Five out of 10 parents felt it was good for her to study what she was interested in, although two out of 10 parents worried about her not making enough money studying Oceanography. Parents' responses indicate that some worry about the job skills that student attain in college. Biesta (2009) placed these work related and learning skills in the qualification category. Parents didn't discuss how studying oceanography would advance skills related to belonging to a certain group (socialization) or that these skills would shape Isabel's individuality or identity (subjectification).

### **College Related Actions and Decisions**

Currently, applying to college requires students and their parents to make vital decisions. Latina/o parents offer moral support by speaking about the importance of college or share college knowledge gained from college access programs to their children (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Downs et al., 2008). The immigrant parents in the study were asked if they had made

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<sup>5</sup> Only nine parents answered this question.

college related actions and decisions for their children. Seven out of 10 immigrant parents talked about making decisions for their children such as helping them with their finances and filling out parental forms, as well as going on college trips and visiting the school or taking classes to learn more about college. Paulina shared:

Pues que lo he llevado a buscar ayuda como aquí a la escuela \_\_\_ con el Señor \_\_\_\_, que está en el centro universitario. Después lo llevé con otra persona que era del colegio de Santa Mónica para que lo guiara, y lo llevé con otra muchachita que vive por aquí, es hija de una amiga, que da las clases de ayuda financiera en \_\_\_. Lo he llevado, pero ahorita no sé si ahorita ya va a calificar para este semestre porque él pagó lo que le tocó este año, pero también al muchachito que está en el 11, estoy en comunicación porque él está con ayuda especial, pero igual, él con sus buenas calificaciones, estamos en contacto con las maestras y una persona que lo apuntó para ir a Glendale [Community College].

Well I have taken him to search for help in the (high school he attends) with (his counselor) who is in the college center. After, I took him to another person from Santa Monica so that they could guide him, and I took him with another young woman who lives around here, the daughter of a friend, who does the financial aid classes at (the high school he attends). I have taken him but now I think he will qualify this semester because he paid what he needed to this year, but also for my son in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, I'm in communication because he needs special help, but with good grades, we are in contact with the teachers and a point person at [Local Community College].

Three out of 10 parents felt that they had not made any decisions or actions related to college for their children.

Participants were also asked about any college related decisions or actions they had made in their own personal lives. No parents in the study attended college. Four out of 10 parents did not feel they made any decisions for themselves because they did not attend college, while four out of 10 others described how they chose not to finish their education. The remaining two parents expressed that this question wasn't relevant to them because they did not go to college.

Jorge, a parent who discussed not finishing his education shared:

Ninguna. Nomás no ir. Pero, y sí pensaba en ir; cuando estaba chico yo quería ser – como México es un país de turistas, yo quería estudiar licenciatura en turismo, por un momento se me ocurrió, no sé dónde se quedó, se perdió, se perdió.

None. Only not to go. But, I did think about going when I was young I wanted to go since Mexico is a country for tourists, and I wanted to get a Bachelor's degree in tourism, but in one moment it didn't occur to me, I don't know where it stopped, it was lost, it was lost.

Lastly, parents were asked how their thoughts affected the college related actions and decisions that they made. Six out of 10 parents spoke about encouraging their children to attend college. Miranda said:

Sí, porque yo siempre les digo, todo el tiempo les digo. Yo estudié primaria, secundaria en México y estudié preparatoria, hasta ahí me quedé. Pero yo he visto que tanto como en México y aquí, los que han tenido la oportunidad de terminar sus carreras en México viven bien. A pesar de que es un país pobre, el que estudie y tiene una licencia también, no es pobre México, viven bien. Y aquí no se diga, estamos en Estados Unidos, viviran mejor. Y yo les digo, Aquí la llave de todo es el estudio y el que no, luego que nos va a quedar, salir y a buscarse la vida como se puede, cómo, más matado, más horas, con lo que te quieren pagar, estás conforme o no conforme y te guste o no te guste. Nos tenemos que aguantar. Eso es todo.

Yes, because I always tell them, all the time I say. I studied elementary, junior high in Mexico and I studied in high school and I stopped there. But I have seen in Mexico and here, that those who have the opportunity to finish their careers in Mexico live well. Even though it's a poor county those who study and have a Bachelor's degree also are not poor in Mexico, they live well. And here, we are in the U.S., they live even better. I tell them, here the key for everything is studying and those who don't, they will be left behind, go out and then search their livelihood how they can, how, killing themselves with more hours, with that they pay then, content or not content, like it or not. We have to endure it.

### **College Access and Race**

High schools with high concentrations of Latina/o and African-American students have been found to have learning conditions that do not maximize student opportunities to enroll in college (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Oakes et al., 2007). Moreover, schools with higher numbers of Latina/o and African-American students may have an inverse relation with the number of students enrolled in college (Martin et al., 2005). College access trends reveal that certain racial and ethnic groups are attending and graduating from college at higher rates. Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a framework to place the central focus on race within a dominant White society



(Solórzano, 1998). Bonilla-Silva (2003/2014) talks about various frames that people use when talking about different racial and ethnic groups. These frames include abstract liberalism, naturalization, minimization of racism and cultural racism. Although his research has focused on the way that Whites use these frames, he also discusses how non-Whites can also use some of these racial frames. The use of these select frames can lead to color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003/2014). Since immigrant parents were not born in this country the way that they view race and ethnicity in regards to college access may be different than those who were born in the United States. This study explored how immigrant Latina/o parents understood race and ethnicity in the context of high school graduation, preparation for college, and college attendance.

Seven out of 10 participants held the understanding that high schools prepare all children to attend and graduate from college (See Table 9). Parents stand behind schools because they blame major differences in preparation on the students themselves or parents. Esperanza stated:

Ahorita he escuchado que muchas escuelas están, no sé de todas, pero he escuchado a la middle school que iba mi hijo, estaban puchandolo mucho siempre. Incluso ahí era, su salón era una universidad.

Now I've heard that many schools are, I don't know if all, but I've heard that the middle school where my son went was pushing him always. His classroom was even a college.

Meanwhile three parents noticed that there were differences in how high schools prepare their children. These differences involved resources such as class size, high quality teachers and counselors, and college preparatory curriculum. Jorge commented:

Sí. Todos dicen que están preparándolos, pero no los preparan igual. Cuando tú vas a – por ejemplo, cuando vas a UCLA, y tú vas de esta zona, te juntas con los demás de todas las zonas que van a estudiar ahí de primer año, y te das cuenta de que los que van de otras zonas, esas clases ya las tomaron, tú tienes que tomarlas ahí porque no te las dieron en la High School, y ellos ya te van aventajando porque ellos están tomando las clases más arriba, como va por números; entonces, tú llegas ahí, y te das cuenta que te falta esta, te falta esta, te falta esta, y tienes que hacerlas en el primer año; y ellos no, ellos ya están empezar a hacer lo de ahí, clases de universidad

Yes. Everyone says that they are preparing them, but they don't prepare them equally. When you go, for example, to UCLA, and you go from this zone, you get together with the rest from all zones, the classes they took, you have to take there because they didn't give them to you in high school. And they have that advantage because they are taking more advanced classes, it goes by number; then you get there and you realize that that one is missing, that one is missing, that one is missing, and you have to do them the first year and they don't, they can begin to do college work.

*High School Preparation for College By Race and Ethnicity: Table 9*

	HS Prepares All Students	Reason HS Prepares or Doesn't Prepare Students
Lorenzo	Yes.	Imagine all schools are there for that reason. Many choose another route.
Sara	Yes	
Elena	Yes.	Schools do prepare them but if they don't have parental support or their own support don't do anything.
Esperanza	Yes.	Heard that her son's school does prepare them.
Alejandra	No.	Half of things supposed to be learning are not learning before they go to college.
Ana	Yes.	Schools prepare students but also depends on the student. Sometimes schools don't pay attention to students and other pressure students to go to college.
Paulina	Yes.	Community colleges cheapest, but students still graduate.
Jorge	No.	Class size, teachers, family, and money issue for certain schools. Students from other schools prepared better for college.
Emilia	No.	Experience where mom was told that her child didn't need to go to college by counselor so a group of mom's organized.
Miranda	Yes.	Schools prepare students but sometimes students don't pay attention.

The same group of parents talked about whether or not graduation was different for various race and ethnic groups. Five out of 10 parents reported that there were differences in graduation and four used the cultural racism frame to explain the variations (see Table 10). There was an idea that Asians were "smarter" and that Latinas/os weren't taught the "love of learning" or were uninformed. Other reasons included economics and expectations of students in the educational system.

Paulina shared:

Pues diferente en el modo que es un orgullo porque a los latinos nos tienen por más ignorantes, pero yo sé que no somos; simplemente porque hay papás también que están ignorantes, y no saben cómo guiar a los hijos pienso yo, porque no se informan, es falta de información, pero todos pueden ir.

Well it's different the way that one is proud because for Latinos they peg us as ignorant, but I know we are not; simply because there are parents also that are ignorant and they don't know how to guide their children and because they don't inform themselves, it's the lack of information, but all can go.

Jorge discussed how some schools had more resources than other schools:

[Para] el blanco es una tradición, una costumbre. Entre los latinos y los negros, es un premio, un esfuerzo. Primero, para con todo el entorno poder mantener la mentalidad de no ir junto a toda la bola que te dicen que no. Después el sistema, que en las escuelas donde estamos nosotros lo que hay es problemas, aunque sea magnet y esa magnet aquí tiene asiáticos – nadie vive aquí casi porque es puro magnet... Entonces, si tú vas a una escuela de \*Green Hills, aún en la pública, parece privada; eso ayuda mucho, y la zona es más blanca.

For Whites it's a tradition, a custom. For Latinos and Blacks, it's a prize, a struggle. First, because with the environment to be able to maintain the mentality of not going with the masses that say no. After it's the system, in schools where we are what there is are problems, even though it's a magnet and this magnet here has Asians. No one lives here almost because it's pure magnet. Then, if you go to a school in \*Green Hills, even though it's public, it seems like it's private. That helps a lot, and the area is more White.

\*Pseudonym

For those who thought that graduation was the same for all race and ethnicities they believed that race shouldn't make a difference. Ana stated:

Aunque son diferentes culturas pienso que no es difícil graduarse aunque seas latino o anglosajón o de diferente raza. Yo pienso que no es difícil, simplemente, como te dije al principio, que el joven quiera.

Although they are different cultures I think that it is not difficult to graduate if you are Latino or White or of a different race. I think that it isn't difficult, simply, like I said before at the beginning, that the young person wants to.

*College Graduation Differences By Race and Ethnicity: Table 10*

	Graduation Different	Reasons for Differences or No Differences in Graduation/ Attendance
Lorenzo	No.	Imagines will change them mentally. Doesn't matter if some have money and some don't.
Sara	Yes.	Latina/os don't do as well as White Americans and Asians. One doesn't teach them love of learning or importance of studying.
Elena	No.	When own kids graduated. Saw all races graduate.
Esperanza	No.	Same for all races. What matters are decisions you make and mastery. Opportunities they have and the ones they take advantage of.
Alejandra	Yes.	Black and Latina/os can't afford it while Asian and Whites have more money. Asians also smarter. Also those born here get things for free.
Ana	No.	Don't think it's difficult to graduate even if you are Latina/o. As long as the young person wants to.
Paulina	Yes	Have Latina/os pegged as ignorant but I know we are not. Some parents are ignorant because they lack information.
Jorge	Yes.	Asian obligation. White tradition. Latina/o and African-Americans a prize and struggle because of those who say you can't and system. Schools in affluent areas are public (but seem private) and mostly white and that helps. . Knows friends that send kids to schools in areas where cleaning houses because better schools.
Emilia	No.	In studies it doesn't make a difference people nor color, but greater accomplishment for Latina/os because there aren't that many Latina/os in college.
Miranda	Yes.	Because some groups have a higher intellect, like Whites and Asians. Come from Japanese line of people wanting to be great businessmen Families have a history of going to college.

Latina/o immigrant parents in the study were asked to review two graphs (see Appendix B). For one graph they were asked to explain the differences in the college graduation rates for Latina/o, African-American, Asian, and White students in California. For the second graph they were asked to give reasons for the differing percentages of Latinas/os in California attending diverse postsecondary institutions including colleges in the University of California or California State University system, private colleges, community colleges, and for profit colleges.

Six out of 10 Latina/o parents gave reasons for differences in college attendance that were using Bonilla Silva's (2003/2014) culturally racist frame (see Table 11). In other words, Latina/o parents have internalized racist ideas about why Latinas/os are not attending college at the same rates as students of other races and ethnicities. Elena shared:

Porque, muchos de esos blancos son muy inteligentes, más que los latinos... Sí, porque quieren superarse más pronto los – como los japonesitos, son muy unidos entre ellos mismos y les gusta subir y subir.

Because, many of those Whites are very intelligent, more than Latinas/os... Yes, because they want to advance faster-like the Japanese, they are very united and amongst themselves and they like to progress and progress.

Miranda said:

Mira, los más inteligentes los chinos, ¿ves? Mira.

Look the most intelligent ones are the Asians, see?

Ana shared that:

...Pero como los asiáticos y eso tienen su diferente cultura, que creo que ahí sí es mucha disciplina. Por eso en muchos es más alto o su licenciatura. Y por eso se gradúan más y pues pasa esto porque los jóvenes realmente en muchas ocasiones no quieren, no quieren hacerlo y uno como papá latino tampoco los fuerza uno y les exige lo que - ya llegan a un límite de que ya no quieren y ya no quieren.

...But like the Asians and they have their different culture, I think that there is a lot of discipline. That's why for many it's higher or their Bachelor's degree. That's why they

graduate more and that happens because young people actually in many instances don't want to, they don't want to do it, and as Latina/o parents we also don't force them to and push them to-they get to a limit where they don't want to anymore and you don't want to.

Four out of 10 parents focused on systemic educational issues and lack of college information to explain differences in college graduation rates (see Table 11). Paulina talked about lack of parent information, although she also discussed lack of parent and student motivation:

Pues a mí siempre – yo siempre he dicho que es falta de información de nosotros los papas. Porque primeramente somos nosotros los que nos educamos para poder educar a los niños; y yo me fijo que muchos papás ni aparecen, yo digo en unas juntas, en los talleres de informativos de cómo hablar con nuestros hijos de la importancia de la universidad.

Well for me always-I've always said that it is the lack of information for parents. Because first, we are the ones who need to educate ourselves so we can educate the children; and I notice that many kid's parents do not appear, I say that for many gatherings, in the parent workshops about how to speak to our children about the importance of college.

Emilia shared her concern about teachers:

¿Ni al 11% llegamos? Ay Padre, qué tristeza. Yo a veces pienso no es tanto que los muchachos no sepan, es como – yo me he fijado aquí en las escuelas, como que los muchachos – aparte de los muchachos, los maestros no se enfocan en motivar a los estudiantes que es importante acabar el High School, para que ellos puedan ser admitidos a cualquier universidad, aunque no tenga el prestigio que tenga, pero que se gradúen de la universidad.

We don't even get to 11%? Oh Lord, how sad. At times I think it's not so much that the youth don't know, it's-I've noticed that in schools, that youth-apart from the youth, the teachers don't focus on motivating students about how important it is to finish high school, so that they can be admitted to any college, even if it doesn't have prestige, but that they graduate from college.

Jorge talked about how the area where you lives matters for schooling:

El lugar donde vives te da la escuela elemental, y te da la High School, y la Middle School. Ahí tienes que hacer mucho esfuerzo para sacarlos de ahí; o 'magnet' o mentir que vives en otro lado, para ir a meterlos en otro lado.

The place where you live gives you elementary school, and it gives you high school, and middle school. There you have to put forth much effort to get them out of there; or magnet or lie that you live in another place to put them in another school.

*Response to College Graduation and Attendance Graphs by Race and Ethnicity: Table 11*

	Reasons for Differences in College Graduation Graph #1	Reasons for Differences in Colleges Latinas/os Attend Graph #2
Lorenzo	Latina/os are lacking information Many didn't attend college. White Americans prepared. Asians like it a lot. Latina/os	Pursue shorter careers and what is easier. Others have to pay a bit more and get better grades.

	and African Americans need to put forth more effort.	
Sara	Many parents don't have a lot of education to push children and think that once high school is done time to work. You can decide what you want for your children's education until they turn 18.	Go because fastest route they can take. The easiest. Less time but you come out with a career.
Elena	Whites are more intelligent. Japanese more unified and Latina/os conform.	Depends on what the students want to study and what they qualify. Not sure. Noticed that nephew went to college because he had good grades. Some colleges more expensive than others.
Esperanza	Parents aren't pushing enough or some schools are better than others. Latina/os settle for working while Asians and Whites want more. Not certain about African-Americans. Those who born here have grandparents who went to college.	Because of conforming. Latina/os conform. Or young women want to get married or get pregnant and men have to work to move forward. Experiences this through what sees in own neighborhood.
Alejandra	Latina/os are the lowest. We can't afford it. If too much money for books then we won't go. They got brains and money.	One school is cheaper than another school. You need brains too but if you don't have a scholarship or money to pay for college you stop. Learned this through speaking to someone in daughter's college prep classes.
Ana	Happens because students lose interest in college. Asians have a lot of discipline. Latina/o parents don't push children. Schools also matter, but parents matter most.	Not everyone wants to go to a four-year college. Easier to study one year versus four-years.
Paulina	Lack of information for parents. First educate ourselves and then we can educate our own children. Lack of information and motivation for youth.	Lack of information because my son experienced that. Didn't get financial aid so went to community college rather than four-year college he wanted to attend.
Jorge	Difference is economic status. Asian and White have better economic situation. Latina/os lower economically. African American below Latina/os economically. Everything is economics and where you live. The place where you live determines the school you will attend. Environment matters.	Easier to go to community colleges and some four-year colleges. It's cheaper and you don't need as high of grades. Competing with others from other areas who are better prepared for college. Talks about how many student get into Cal States but not UC's. Most concerned about those attending for profit colleges and community colleges because don't end up getting anywhere.
Emilia	Teachers don't focus on motivating students to finish high school so they can go to college. Older children went to affluent magnet and the teachers there are more focused and there are more resources.	Counselor told her that it depends on the grades. Also kids don't graduate with requirements needed for college. Community college most accessible. For profit colleges for short careers.
Miranda	Chinese come from business descendants. Not conformists like Latinos.	Perhaps Latinos don't have the grades to get into the certain colleges that require them.

Latina/o parents were also asked to explain the differences in enrollment for Latinas/os in varying post-secondary institutions. Eight out of 10 parents discussed how Latina/o college choices related to a more accessible, faster, easier, and cheaper path. Parents described how students might not have the necessary requirements for certain colleges, that some colleges were cheaper, and had faster times to graduation (see Table 11). Lorenzo shared:

Pues yo me imagino porque pues la del 38% que es de eso, pues son carreras más cortas, uno se va a lo más fácil, Ay, voy a ir esta carrera corta mejor, para qué quiero estudiar 6, 8 años. Mejor me voy a 3. Y pues eso, son las más cortas, bueno, se tiene que pagar un poco más, más esfuerzo más calificaciones, pero si se terminaran estas dos, fueran para arriba porque son carreras completas. Estas son carreras pero no completas.

Well, I imagine that because the 38% of this, well they are shorter careers, one goes to what's easiest, Oh, I'll go to this shorter career better, why would I want to study 6, 8 years. Better I go to 3. And well, those are the shortest, if you have to pay a little more, more effort, higher grades, but if you finish these two, you would go to the top because they are complete careers. These are careers but not complete careers.

Emilia said:

Yo pienso que son las calificaciones, cuando ellos meten sus aplicaciones siempre se basan, y eso sí nos lo dijo el consejero, se basan mucho en lo – ¿cómo se dice?, en sus calificaciones que tienen ellos para poder ser admitidos en la universidad, porque no importa, pueden hacer 20 mil latinos queriendo entrar a UCLA, pero no agarran tantos tampoco, y los pocos que agarran tienen que tener buenas calificaciones. Y a veces lo que pasa con nuestros hijos es que se gradúan de la High School, pero no se gradúan con los requerimientos que se necesitan para poder entrar en la universidad.

I think it's the grades, when they put their applications in, always they are based, and that if their counselor didn't tell them that, they are based on a lot on-how do you say-on their grades for them to be admitted to college, but it doesn't matter, it could be 20 thousand Latinos that want to attend UCLA, but they don't take very many either, and the few they take have to have good grades. And at times what happens with our kids is that they graduate high school, but they don't graduate with the requirements necessary to be admitted to college.

The two remaining parents said that there is a lack of information and that Latinas/os conform to explain enrollment differences.

Latina/o immigrant parents were also asked what recommendations they would give to get more Latinas/os to attend and graduate from college. Six out of 10 respondents described recommendations that centered on parents. Some of the responses entailed parents pushing their children, parents supporting their children, and discussed the need for more college information for parents (see Table 12). Sara said:

Pues, que fueran más a las escuelas para que los padres pudie... Hacer como juntas, para que los padres sepan más y se eduquen más los padres. Se eduque más uno, para poder ayudar a los hijos. Entonces, más información a los padres, para que ellos puedan entender todo el proceso. Entender para los hijos.

Well, that they would go more to the schools so that parents could... Have gatherings, so that parents know more and educate themselves more. One educates themselves more to help their children. So, more information to parents for them to understand the process. They can understand it for their children.

Miranda shared:

Mira, en primer lugar, es que tengan un círculo de amigos que sean estudiosos, que no tengan malas amistades que no quieran estudiar, eso es primero. Segundo, es el apoyo que uno siempre tiene que estar apoyándolos, y dándoles las herramientas que ellos necesitan para el estudio, ese es otro importante, el apoyo y estar uno diciéndoles: ‘Tienes que ir, tú puedes,’ y así. Y también pues ayudándoles en lo que uno pueda. Y qué te diría, pues – y que quiera el muchacho o la muchacha.

Look, first, it’s that they have a circle of friends that are studious, that they don’t have bad relationships that don’t want to study, that’s first. Second, it’s the support that one has to be supporting them, and giving them tht tools that they need to study, that is another important one, the support and telling them: “You have to go, you can go.” And also helping them in what you can. And how would I say this, well-that the young man or young woman wants to [attend].

The four parents who did not speak about parents in their responses detailed items such as more scholarship money, the importance of teachers, and student commitment and motivation, or not knowing what to respond.

*Types of Recommendation Increase Number of Latinas/os that Attend College: Table 12*

	Type of Recommendations
Lorenzo	Parents need to be more educated about importance of school and college for their children. Many parents didn’t finish elementary school or junior high school. We need to get more involved and form organizations with other parents.
Sara	More gatherings at schools for parents so they can educate themselves more and help push their children.
Elena	Not sure because it feels like different times than when her older children were in school.
Esperanza	Show them from the time they are little. Start with the parents, teachers, and publicize it more at the school and on television. Bombard your mind with this to change your mind.
Alejandra	You either need to have money or a scholarship to graduate. Learning about this in Parent College. Daughter may go to army to help with college costs.
Ana	Have support from school. School should always be talking about college and how it benefits them and how community colleges offer good options. Parents need to support their children to go o college. Tell them they need to go. Colleges should help students go to college. Her niece had a hard time but went to college. You can get help once you are in college.
Paulina	More workshops to motivate youth because they need to be informed and have goals. Parents also need to talk to their children about school. Saddened by youth in gangs and in the street.
Jorge	Have persistence to transfer from a community college to a four-year. To prepare for a four-year college schools should pay more attention to and have classes to motivate students to achieve at higher levels to qualify for college
Emilia	Teachers matter a lot. Son had four teachers that wrote him recommendation letters and helped a lot. Other teachers not passionate about that they do. Students’ commitment to studying matters as well.
Miranda	Parents should support children to go to college and provide them with the basic needs. Encourage them to go to college.



## Sources of College Information

Latina/o immigrant parents were asked to identify the sources they used to receive college information. First, they were asked who they spoke to about college. Second, they were asked to name any other sources where they received their college information. Four out of nine<sup>6</sup> immigrant parents spoke to other parents in their children’s schools about college. Some of these conversations happened in programs for parents that were at the schools. Three out of nine parents also spoke to their own children or younger family members about college. Two parents didn’t really speak to anyone regarding college.

When asked about other sources of college information, parents described school (six out of nine) and television (three out of nine) the most (See Table 13). It is interesting to note that some parents did have children who attended college and they could gather information from their children’s experiences in college.

*Sources of College Information: Table 13*

	Sources of College Information	Other Parents Sources of College Info.
Immigrant Parents	School, internet, television, own children, other people, parents who have children who are attending or who have attended college, and colleges	School, media, internet, visiting colleges, sports, other parents, and brochures in the mail

Paulina described parent clubs at the school as a one source of information:

Pues en los clubs de padres, cuando van personas a informarnos cómo buscar ayuda, me gusta mucho ir a preguntar. Me sirve para los niños, nomás que como ellos son grandes, el muchacho es el que tiene que buscar la ayuda; pero por falta de información no queda.

Well in the parent clubs, when people go to inform ourselves how to search for help, I like to go a lot and ask. It serves me for the children, only that since they are older, the young one has to search for help, but there is no lack of information.

Moreover, participants felt that other parents were good sources of college information: Emilia noted:

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<sup>6</sup> Only nine parents answered these two questions

Sí, como las mismas señoras que tenemos hijos ahí en la escuela que ya se van a graduar este año, estamos hablando – van a ir a otras universidades los otros, y lo que también le digo a él que tiene que echarle ganas, a mi niño éste, que él tiene que ir a la universidad. Uno les tiene que ir hablando desde pequeños a ellos, que ellos se vayan enfocando de que tienes que llegar hasta allá.

Yes, since they are the same women that have children here in school that are graduating this year, we are talking-they will go to other colleges and I also tell him that he has to put forth effort, to my son, that he has to attend college. One has to talk to them since they are young, so they can be focusing on that they have to get there.

Parents were also asked to report on where they imagined that other parents receive college information. Their answers included sources such as schools, the media, visiting colleges, and the Internet (see Table 13).

Additionally, parents were asked what sources shaped their ideas about who should go to college and what described an ideal college student. Five out of 10 parents' conclusions came from themselves and their own experiences, two out of 10 parents discussed their friends or neighbors, two out of 10 parents spoke about family (including their own children), and one parent only mentioned television as a source. Miranda shared that her ideas were her own:

No, yo realmente yo sola, son mis ideas personales.

No, really only myself, they are my personal ideas.

Paulina mentioned that others helped shape her thoughts and ideas:

Siempre cuando tengo un grupo de amigas cuando nos juntamos, platicamos de eso, y mis amigas como su hija se queda Anaheim, en la universidad de Anaheim; otras, su hijo se fue para Massachusetts becado; o sea, todas las que nos juntamos, platicamos y todas quisiéramos que todos sobresalgan, todos los niños y, sí, pues yo le platico a mí hijo y él también está buscando siempre.

Always when I have my group of friends when we get together we speak of that, and my friends like her daughter stays in Anaheim in the university of Anaheim, for others, her son went to Massachusetts on a scholarship, that is, all of us get together, we talk and all of us want everyone to be successful, all of the children and well, I talk to my son and he is always searching.

## **Conclusion**

Parents were asked several questions about what college is, who belongs in college, the value and purpose of college, how they make college-related decisions, college access and race, and sources of college information. The frames of parents emerged through these questions. Many parents learned about college through their children and schools. Parents placed a high value on a college education and the economic possibilities that a college education will bring to their children. Parents seem to still be learning about differences between diverse colleges in the United States, but many preferred four-year colleges where their children can attain Bachelor's degrees. Immigrant Latina/o parents also understand schools as institutions that do prepare their students for college and that any barriers to attending college can be overcome on an individual basis.

## **Parent Vignettes**

All 10 participants had vital information to share regarding college access. Four parents are highlighted in the following parent vignettes. The parents are exemplars of parents in the study. Reading each vignette provides a sense of similarities and differences in the way that parents understand the value and purpose of college, who belongs in college, and explanations for gaps in college completion for Latinas/os.

### *Deep Frames for the Importance and Value of College, Informed About College*

#### **\*Jorge**

Jorge completed most of his education in Mexico although he did have his GED from the United States. Both of his daughters have attended college and one has finished her degree at a highly selective four-year college. In fact, one of his daughters was attending graduate school to receive her Master's degree. Both of his sons were currently attending a magnet high school. Jorge's college experience was gained through his daughters' pathways to college, especially his

daughter who graduated from a four-year college. Jorge had deep frames for the importance and value of college, while also accumulating much college information through the experience of his two older daughters. Meanwhile, Jorge's wife, who was also present for the interview, had attended parent workshops at their sons' school to learn more about college. She had shared this information with her husband. Jorge did not feel that some colleges were better than others. He acknowledged that some colleges were more well-known, he even cited an article he read that details how much more money a student can make by attending a prestigious college versus a lesser known college. Yet, he wasn't convinced that prestige would necessarily affect the post-secondary outcomes of students. The colleges he discussed as good options were all four-year colleges. He shared the evolution of his thinking from his two older children to his two younger children. With his first two daughters he simply wanted them to graduate from high school. Once his daughter attended the highly selective four-year college he realized that he could aspire to more for his sons. That is why he wanted them to attend a four-year college. He was open to the type of four-year college, but when talking about private colleges he expressed his concern with the high cost of attendance. Jorge was aware that there were scholarships available, but added that they are competitive. He was wary of community college because he was concerned that his sons would not transfer to a four-year college. He was more open to the type of college that children in the neighborhood would attend.

Jorge felt that everyone should go to college to progress in life. He talked about how he made decent money, but that he made it through physical labor that was wearing down his body and that he probably had to put in 100 times more effort to make the money than someone with a college degree. His wife at one point started crying during the interview when she talked about the dust that gets on her husbands hands and how she wanted a better life for their sons. The ideal student for Jorge was a student who dedicated himself, had fun, but also graduated. Jorge imagined that college was important because it changed the form of thinking for you and your children. College was also important for the neighborhood, because it brought about cultural and economic change. He went on to explain that the purpose of college is to prepare for a better life. In his experience, he realized that if he had attended college he would probably not have come to this country. He was thinking of studying tourism in Mexico, but instead he came to the United States. He felt that a college degree would have changed his thinking, friends, jobs, living situation, decision to become a father... basically everything.

Jorge understood that educational inequalities exist in the U.S. educational system. When he talked about college access and race he discussed that high school graduation is not the same for students of different race and ethnicities. He felt that for Asians it's an obligation, Whites a tradition, and Latinas/os and African-Americans a prize and a struggle. Jorge described that wealthier White areas had public high schools that seemed like private high schools. Additionally, he shared that he has friends whose wives cleaned houses and enrolled their children in schools in those wealthier neighborhoods where they cleaned houses to get a better education. Jorge also expressed that classroom overcrowding can be a concern. He understood that students that live in better areas are more prepared to attend colleges because of the classes they are given. He explained how those who are not as prepared are catching up in college to those that have been properly prepared. When Jorge read the graph showing difference in college graduation between diverse racial and ethnic groups he explained these as resulting from difference in economics and where you live. Also, when he was shown a graph with differing attendance rates for Latinas/os to distinct types of colleges he explained how concerned he was with those that attend community colleges and for-profit colleges because students don't end up

going anywhere. His recommendation to increase the number of Latinas/os that attend and graduate from college was for students to have persistence to transfer from a community college to a four-year college. He felt that schools should also have classes that motivate students to achieve at high levels and helps them qualify for college.

*Deep Frames for the Importance and Value of College, Informed About College*

**\*Emilia**

Emilia was born in Guatemala and completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade there. She had seven children. She talked about one child in elementary school, one child in a magnet high school, and one child in a public high school. None of her children have attended college. Emilia had deep frames about the importance and value of college, and has learned a significant amount of college information by being very involved with her children's schools, college programs, and community organizations. Emilia spoke about her college experiences by relaying how she has visited several colleges with her son's high school. She also spoke to other mothers at the high school about colleges. Emilia also described a program where parents visit different universities. This program is offered through a major Spanish television network. Emilia went on to have a long conversation about prestige when she discussed why some colleges were better than others. She detailed prestigious colleges and how attending those institutions could benefit students even though students could also do well at any college. Emilia shared that she learned about the effect of prestige when she went to visit a private college. A young woman who she spoke to told her how attending a prestigious college could lead to greater respect for students. Emilia noted how much they helped students and focused on college graduation at this particular private college. Moreover, she experienced the importance of prestige first-hand as she visited a community college and noticed that when parents in the group of visitors said one of their children was from a local high school they were received with disinterest, but when they said that one of their children attended the magnet school they were much more welcomed.

When visiting college campuses Emilia noticed that there were many more White and Asian students as compared to Latina/o students. She described Latinas/os as being the minority on college campuses. Emilia would like her children to attend four-year colleges. She named two colleges in particular, and then explained how it really depended on her children's GPA. Emilia talked about how a college representative explained to her children that having a 2.5 GPA would disqualify them from certain colleges. Emilia wanted her children and the children in her neighborhood to go to a four-year college if possible. She expressed her concern with the cost of college items such as books. She also discussed how four-year colleges provide a better chance of attaining a college degree and chose colleges for her children and those in the neighborhood with a thought to the institution's graduation rates. Emilia had learned a great deal about college by attending parent workshops and regrets not getting as involved with school for her four older children. Emilia is also involved with a neighborhood organization that focuses on assisting youth to clean the neighborhood and stay out of gangs.

Emilia understood college as being a place for everyone. An ideal student to her was one that was focused and put forth effort towards their studies. She felt that students should go to college to expand their thinking, for better jobs, higher salaries, and to stay out of trouble. Emilia spoke about the salary differential for those who clean houses and doctors. She also discussed how her not attending college has meant that she doesn't make as much working at a Laundromat and that she is unable to relate to certain educational experiences of her children.

Emilia had a child at a young age and was unable to continue with her schooling, but she wanted to study engineering. She hoped to someday return to school.

Emilia was aware of educational inequalities that exist in the U.S. educational system. Although she felt that graduating and attending college didn't differ by race, she understood that not all high schools prepare all students for college. Emilia had been a parent volunteer for six years and spoke about how she had noticed that counselors will not pay attention to struggling students. She said that as someone that is very involved in her children's school she had realized that not all students are prepared. She gives an example of counselors that were recommending that children become mechanics because they were struggling in school. She was really bothered by that so she joined with other moms to form a group that fights for students' rights. In her own experience she had one son that is a good student and another that is not and noticed that the better student was being given A-G (or college preparatory) classes, but that her other child was not. So, she told the counselor that she didn't care what classes he thought her child should take, her child had a right to A-G college preparatory courses. Emilia talked about resources to explain the gap in college graduation for different races and ethnicities. She explained how wealthier schools provide more resources than poorer schools and that students might choose to attend different colleges because of their grades. Her final recommendation to increase the number of Latinas/os that attend college was to have more passionate and supportive teachers in the schools.

*Deep Frames for the Importance of College, But Little Information about College*

**\*Sara**

Sara was born in Mexico and completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade there. She had two children. One child attended a local elementary school and the other attended a local high school. Sara wanted the best for her children, but didn't have college information readily accessible to her. Thus, her frames for the importance and purpose of college are deep, but she's still developing her understanding about certain aspects of college. Initially, Sara spoke about sending her child to UCLA because she's heard it's best to study there. She also heard that UCLA had many requirements and that different colleges are best for certain professions. She admitted that she wasn't very informed regarding college. Since her daughter would be the first to attend college, Sara didn't have a great deal of college information available to her. For example, she described watching television with her husband and children as a way to gather college information, but didn't indicate that she spoke to any school personnel or acquaintances about college. Later in the interview she chose the community college profile as the higher education institution where she wanted to send her daughter due to its geographic proximity. Sara was one of few parents in the study who knows no one who has a four-year college degree. Sara was planning to become more involved in school to gather college information for her daughter. Sara understood that there are some colleges that are better than others, but didn't elaborate on the differences. In fact, while college quality matters she emphasized that a student's effort matters to the extent that they could attend any college. Sara also understood college as being a place for anyone who wants to pursue a profession. This explained why Sara imagined college as being a place for everyone including the children in her neighborhood. Sara placed value and importance on college because it related to a better future and jobs. Sara described how if she had studied she would have been better for herself and for her children.

Sara had no understanding of educational inequalities that exist in the U.S. educational system. She envisioned that high schools equally prepare students for college from every racial

and ethnic group. She held the idea that any disparities in education stem from individual problems. For example, graduation was different because we (Latinas/os) don't teach our kids the love of learning and the importance of studying. She explained the reason for the difference in college attendance for diverse races and ethnicities being that many parents don't have education to push children to college and instead push them to work once high school is done. Sara felt that there are differences in the types of colleges that Latinas/os attend because they go the fastest and easiest route. She recommended that schools organize more gatherings where Latina/o immigrant parents can educate themselves.

*Deep Frames for Importance and Purpose of College, Somewhat Informed About College*

**\*Esperanza**

Esperanza was born in Mexico and completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade there. She had four children. Two were married adults. She had another daughter who was attending a highly selective four-year college and another son that attended the local public high school. Esperanza had deep frames about the importance and value of college, and some college information that she had gathered as her daughter had successfully navigated her way to a selective four-year college in California. Esperanza supported her daughter by helping her move to college and setting up her apartment. She also signed papers as part of her daughter's college matriculation.

Esperanza felt that some colleges were better than others. During her interview she talked about the importance of prestige. Esperanza explained that a college with higher prestige can lead to attaining a job, better career and Master's degrees, and students who push themselves to keep up with other students. When Esperanza described her college experience she talked about her daughter's path to college. She shared how her daughter always aspired for more in her life. Her daughter would push herself and read in her spare time. Esperanza spoke with her children regarding college and also gets information from school. She described how she started getting information for college with her daughter starting in elementary school. She wanted her son to attend a four-year college like her daughter. She would like her son to attend the college her daughter attends or a private college. Esperanza would also like the children in her neighborhood to attend college. In one instance, she relayed that she wanted for the neighborhood children what she wants for her children, which is going to a four-year college. She thought that everyone should go to college because it could lead to more positive thinking, good jobs, life advancement and other individual benefits, while also resulting in benefits that are good for neighborhood, country, and world. Esperanza also understood that anyone can go to college who is hard working and has parents pushing them.

Esperanza was unaware of educational inequalities that exist in the U.S. educational system. She understood any disparities in education as being the result of individual efforts and circumstances. Esperanza envisioned high schools as environments that prepare all students regardless of race and ethnicity. As an example, she described how her son's positive experience in middle school where they pushed him and where his classroom was named after a college. Esperanza also felt that graduation was the same for all race and ethnicities. She explained that what matters are the decisions you make and the opportunities that student take advantage of. Yet, after she viewed the graph on the disparities in college graduation for Latinas/os, African-Americans, Whites, and Asians she slightly changed her mind and stated that some schools may be doing a better job pushing students than others. Yet, later she blamed individual Latina/os for their higher education choices and discusses that Latinas/os conform by getting married early and settling for a job rather than college. She talked about how those who are born here have

grandparents who went to college. Esperanza was struggling to make sense of educational inequalities in a system where her daughter and son have been very successful. Esperanza's final recommendation to get more Latinas/os to attend and graduate from college was to saturate young people with college information at a very young age. She wants this knowledge to be publicized to parents, teachers, schools, and on television.

Every single parent saw college as important for their own children and many pointed to the financial benefits of college. Every parent also held the equity frame and wanted everyone to attend college. The vignettes highlight differences in that ways in which parents received information regarding college that shaped their cognitive frames. Those parents who had children that completed college or who participated in more school-based college knowledge gathering had more information regarding college than those who did not know anyone who attended college or did not participate in parent programs centered on college information. These four parents believed that some colleges were better than others and had varying ideas of why, although many pointed to prestige as an important difference. The parents also had very different understandings about why there are differences in educational outcomes and opportunities for students by race and ethnicity, where some parents use culturally racist frames while others point to more structural issues. Several of the similarities and differences described in the four parent vignettes were experienced by other parents in the study.



## Chapter 5: Policymaker Findings

In California the issue of educational access for all students has been in existence for over 150 years. As far back as the early 1800's California barred Mexicans from attending schools with White children (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999). Politically, this historical legacy of separate and unequal education created a racially charged climate that has led to important state initiatives in California such as Proposition 13, Proposition 187, and Proposition 209. More recently, one campaign in Los Angeles advocated for increased college preparatory classes resulting from the community organizing efforts of Los Angeles youth and community advocacy groups (Rogers & Morrell, 2011). It is within this history and political context that policymakers, both at the state and local level, must wrestle with the idea of college access for students in Los Angeles, California.

Examining the cognitive frames of policymakers can reveal the deep understandings of policymakers who represent the constituents of a metropolitan area in Southern California. Frames are used to organize and understand your experience (Goffman, 1974). Bateson (1972, 2000) presents several ideas about how meaning is derived only in a contextual manner. Lakoff (2006) connects cognitive frames to politics and explains the unconscious and common sense nature of frames.

Studies tying cognitive frames to educational policy explored different frames emerging from policymakers, head teachers, and teachers regarding literacy policy; framing in the context of teachers and new literacy policies; examined how professional biographies and professional careers affect how two beginning school leaders made sense of and framed problems they encountered; as well as how frames were used to explained differential outcomes of underrepresented college students (Mills, 2011; Coburn, 2006; Slegers, Wassink, van Veen, &

Imants, 2009); and Bensimon, 2005). Additionally, the FrameWorks Institute has completed studies investigating the cognitive frames for different groups of people in K-12 and higher education (Chart & Kendall-Taylor, 2008; Simon & Davey, 2010). As the literature demonstrates, cognitive frames are the building blocks of a person's understanding of the world. Analyzing the cognitive frames of policymakers in a metropolitan area in Southern California will provide greater knowledge about the thoughts that these decision makers have regarding college access, as well as how these ideas are formed and affect the decisions that they make regarding educational policy.

For my study I interviewed eight policymakers in a large metropolitan area in Southern California. The main research questions for the study:

#### *Research Questions*

- 1) What are Latina/o parents' cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?
- 2) What are policymakers cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?
- 3) Do the members of each of these groups have important conceptual framing similarities or differences?

When investigating the deep understandings, or cognitive frames of policymakers it is informative to be aware of their background and history. Six of the policymakers interviewed were affiliated with a large district in a metropolitan area where the study was conducted

(\*Andrew, David, Vanessa, Diego, Mariana, and Soledad). The District representatives were involved in setting or influencing district policies. They were high-standing officials in leadership positions at the District. Two of the eight policymakers (\*James and Ivan) interviewed were key staff for state and local elected officials from the same metropolitan area of the study. Three of the policymakers were White while the remaining policymakers were Latinas/os. All of the policymakers in the study graduated from a four-year college. All of the policymakers also had children or family members in the K-12 system ,that were in college, or are college graduates (see Table 1).

*\*To protect the identity of the participants pseudonyms were used*

*Demographics of Policymakers: Table 1*

	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	College Graduate	Type of College Attended	Children/ Family in K-12 system or College/College Graduates	Affiliation
Andrew	White	Male	Yes	4 year	Yes	District
David	White	Male	Yes	4 year	Yes	District
Vanessa	Latina	Female	Yes	4 year	Yes	District
Diego	Latino	Male	Yes	4 year	Yes	District
Mariana	Latina	Female	Yes	4 year	Yes	District
Soledad	Latina	Female	Yes	4 year	Yes	District
Ivan	Latino	Male	Yes	2yr and 4 yr	Yes	Local or state office
James	White	Male	Yes	4 year	Yes	Local or state office

### **Defining the College Experience and College**

All policymakers attended college and had individual higher educational experiences that shaped their frames about college. Seven out of eight policymakers described their experiences as positive. This means that when policymakers think about college it is framed mostly in a positive light.

In an attempt to shift from focusing on educational outcomes, Gert Biesta, an educational philosopher, set forth three purposes of education including qualification, socialization, and subjectification (Biesta, 2009). Qualification captures how education offers a certain set of skills and knowledge that prepare people for jobs, life, or for doing something. Socialization in education occurs when we become particular members of a political, social, or cultural order (Biesta, 2009). Thus, socializing in college and creating friendships in college is meaningful because you are now part of that social group. Lastly, Biesta (2009) proposes that subjectification occurs in education when one becomes an independent and autonomous thinker. Essentially, subjectification is when education contributes to personal individuality. Biesta's three categories were used to sort the frames of policymakers.

Most policymakers spoke of the qualification-or knowledge and skills that they gained during their college years. Whether the skills were preparing them for a job or for life, policymakers felt that college served its purpose in this manner. Andrew stated:

I enjoyed it because it just started to instill study habits and continuous learning and just exposing myself to new fields...And then my last years I focused on a track for business and so then I was more into business school that was more regimented than just business skills and learning.

Several policymakers also discussed the socializing aspects of college in that they learned to interact with those who were different than them. Diego detailed learning about diversity skills in college. He shared:

So, it's going through that experience plus, it was challenging at times at the very beginning while I had some varying, sort of, how...to interact, with people from other cultures and backgrounds.

Lastly, Diego also spoke about independence being a part of his college experience.

Diego said:

[You] get your independence by achieving your education.

It is evident that policymakers had multi-faceted frames for their time in college related to qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Policymakers found that their own college experiences offered them several types of benefits regarding their own personal and professional growth.

After detailing their own college experiences, policymakers were asked to indicate some of the sources for their college information. Since policymakers had access to educational information, many used their jobs, research, and/or universities to inform themselves about college. Policymakers also relayed that media, family, community, and their own experience were sources of college information. Later, they discussed where they imagine other parents, meaning those in the general public, would gather college information. Participants gave similar answers to how other parents receive information, although some expressed that more educated parents would have more resources to gain college related information as opposed to less educated parents. For example Ivan stated:

With limited resources the college counselor is focusing on those kids whose parents might be calling in or the kids who show up to her office because they do think about going to college. They have a disconnect from the kid not knowing that you can go to college. Then the parents don't know. Yeah, I think there's a gap there.

A complete summary of the answers are summarized in Table 2:

*Summary of the Sources of College Information for Policymakers and Other Parents: Table 2*

	Sources of College Information	Other Parents Sources of College Info.
Policymakers	Job, research, universities (students, alumni, staff, etc.), media, counselors, own children, own experience, community, advocates	Families, friends, neighborhoods, communities, media, K-12 schools, counselors, research (including books, websites, etc.) own experience

### **Quality of College**

Policymakers were asked several questions related to how they framed college quality and the differences between colleges. Seven out of eight policymakers held the understanding

that some colleges are better than others (see Table 3). In their minds, not all colleges are created equal. The reasons for why some colleges were better than others varied. Some policymakers described actual differences in the quality of professors and college graduation, while others spoke more about how certain colleges might be a better “fit” for certain kinds of students depending on their major or other individual characteristics. Soledad said:

Well, they have different functions and some colleges are better at helping kids complete. I think largely because they've got a focus on it. Some people, some colleges are better at creating opportunities for non-traditional profile students. Some colleges are better at building the pipeline or the athlete, you know, reaching out to our elementary schools and middle schools. Some colleges are better at a particular thing or discipline because they have strong faculty and reputation.

Policymakers detailed what type of college they would want their children or family members to attend. They were also asked what type of college they would want the children in California to attend. Importantly, they were asked to make decisions based on their identity as a parent or family member as well as their identity as a policymaker. These two identities elicited different frames for college quality. As parents or family members, most policymakers wanted their children/family to attend some type of college, with a higher number who chose four-year colleges over two-year colleges. In fact, of the two policymakers that chose two-year and four-year colleges as an option, one said they would choose a two-year college if there was a plan to transfer to a four-year college. Only one policymaker gave a vague answer about the type of college their child should attend, but earlier this same policymaker stated that he wanted his children to go to college.

The policymakers were more reluctant to make decisions about what type of college the children in California should attend. Half of participants did not specify what college they wanted children in California to attend (see Table 3). Three participants chose a four-year

college for children across the state, while one policymaker chose a two-year or four-year college for young Californians.

In order to make the differences between colleges more concrete, policymakers were given profiles of four different types of colleges in California: a two-year community college, a four-year college in the California State University system, a four-year college in the University of California School system, and a four-year private liberal arts college (see Appendix B). The profiles had information that included size, location, degrees offered, number of students enrolled, cost, financial aid, transfer and graduation rates, and acceptance rates. Policymakers were asked to choose which of these colleges they would send their children to. Six out of eight policymakers chose a four-year college for their own college children based on the profiles (see Table 3). Four out of eight policymakers chose a four-year college from the profiles for the children in California to attend, while the other four did not want to generalize. It is interesting to note that policymakers were more likely to choose a four-year college when presented with actual college profiles and having to make decisions of what kind of college they would send their own children and the children in California to. With the profiles in hand, most chose four-year colleges. Perhaps they were influenced by the low transfer rates for the students that were assisting the community college profiled. Thus, when thinking of frames for college quality, it appears that a four-year college was seen as one of the most desirable places for students.

*Different Types of College: Table 3*

	Colleges Better Than Others	Type of College Want Children/Family To Attend	Type of College Want Children in CA to Attend	Type of College for Children/Family from College Profiles	Type of College Children in CA from College Profiles
Andrew	Yes	It depends	It depends	It depends	It depends
David	Yes	4 year	4 year	4 year	4 year
Vanessa	Yes	4 year	It depends	4 year	4 year
Diego	Yes	4 year	4 year	4 year	Does not want to generalize

Mariana	No	4 year	2yr/4yr	4 year	It depends
Soledad	Yes	2yr or 4 yr	It depends	4 year	4 year
Ivan	Yes	*	4 year	4 year	It depends
James	Yes	2 yr or 4 yr	It depends	It depends	4 year

*\*No answer for this question*

Ivan stated:

I'm a big believer in our UC and our CSU schools. We need to do a better job of making sure those schools are for our local kids, particularly the UC schools. I think the CSU schools do a good job of that. Mostly it's local kids who come. The UC system has gotten away a little bit too much from focusing on their mission, which is to serve California residents.

Other differences that policymakers noted when asked about what distinguished one college from another in the profiles included: cost, degrees offered, completion rates, public/private, 2 year or 4 year, admittance rates, location, and size.

### **Who Belongs In College: Choice, Equity, and Differentiation**

Another vital question centers on who should go to college. A previous study of 50 influential Californians revealed beliefs about who should go to college could be categorized into frames for choice, equity, and differentiation (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). Influential Californians were key staff working with Democratic and Republican legislators in the state and those that influenced their thinking on education. The frame for choice is one where students and families are given a choice to go to college. The frame for equity is that everyone should be prepared to go to college. Lastly, the frame for differentiation is that there should be differentiated paths where some students will go to college and other students will not go to college (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012).

In the current study, eight policymakers were asked to consider who should go to college. No respondents used the frame for differentiation. This can perhaps be attributed to the district policies that support careers and college going for all students. Seven out of eight policymakers use the frame of “choice” for students and families when responding to questions about who



should go to college. These policymakers were coded as choice even when they stated that any students' who want to go should attend or that the opportunity for students should exist because at times students do not have sufficient college knowledge to make an informed decision about whether or not they want to attend college. Vanessa, who espoused the equity frame described this dilemma when she stated:

Who should go to college? Well, how could I say anyone should not go to college, right? I think ... It's an interesting question you ask because when we talk about choice and kids should go to college if they want to go to college, it ... to me, it begs the question, well, what if you're not aware of college? Does that mean that you don't go because you're not interested in college and you're not aware of college? I think we should, we should be giving more information about what college is and provide accessibility also in terms of financial support.

In comparison, Diego expressed the choice frame:

All students should be given the opportunity to go ...and be successful. Then, make the decision. I would not say that I would ever want to be in a position that's determining who goes. That'd have to be a student, that decision ultimately. Our job is to make sure that it is a parent-student decision and, not an adults decision, that's either a teacher or a counselor.

*Students Who Belong in College: Table 4*

	Who Should Go to College	Ideal College Students
Andrew	Choice-prepare all students, but a personal choice	Take responsibility for learning, good within school and community
David	Choice-every student who wants to	Whoever wants to go
Vanessa	Equity-how could she say anyone should not go	Happy, interested in learning, have a support system
Diego	Choice-parent student decision	College ready- academically, socially, and emotionally. Students are ready to engage in high order thinking and collaborate with other students.
Mariana	Choice-every student should have the opportunity to go	Has self-motivation, a strong work ethic
Soledad	Choice-everybody who wants to go to college	Self-aware, self-efficacious, purposeful, self-directed
Ivan	Choice-everyone should	*

	go or have the opportunity	
James	Choice-any student who wants to and can be reasonably successful	High school graduate, looks like California, diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds

\*No answer

Participants were asked about the traits of ideal college students and they had very distinct ideas of what those were. For Vanessa, who espoused the “equity” frame students need only be happy and interested in learning while having a support system. The rest of the policymakers who had the frame of “choice” had more lengthy descriptions of the characteristics that ideal college students should have. For Mariana, the ideal college student was described this way:

Has to have a level of self-motivation. And they have to be focused, have a strong work ethic. They have to be engaged. They want ... They have to understand that there has to be a balance in life. So, there are a lot of attractions or distractions, I should say, in ... college. But it’s about connecting with those on campus and being part of the, the campus community particularly if you live either on campus dorms or on campus housing, just stay connected and be part of the fabric of a life of, of a college to really, I think, benefit from the entire school... college experience.

Two participants detailed characteristics that referred to learning. The broadest answer came from two participants one of whom was David. He said,

Ah, the ideal college student is a student who wants to go to college. That’s it.

This answer was not surprising given that David expressed that students should “want” to go to college. David’s idea that students should want to go to college is coded as a choice frame rather than an equity frame because there are certain conditions in place that don’t truly give certain students the option to “choose” to go to college. David’s response differed from Vanessa who felt that every child should go to college and that some students don’t know enough to “choose” college.

Finally, policymakers were asked about who helped shape their ideas about who should go to college and what an ideal college student looks like. Four out of seven<sup>7</sup> participants did not speak about talking to others to shape their ideas about who should go to college and ideal college students. The three remaining policymakers who answered the question referred to their own experiences and sources such as friends, family, and colleagues being sources of information. Soledad shared:

I talked to ... I think I talked to a lot of people. I mean, it's all the people who helped me know why I should go to college... I didn't say it before but college absolutely contributes to interrupting poverty ... There is a huge difference from those who have completed post-secondary experience to those who have not.

### **Value and Purpose of College**

Participants were asked a series of questions that addressed frames related to the value and purpose of college. Previous research has found the purpose of education has been described as one related to serving the individual, job preparation, civic engagement, knowledge and skills such as critical thinking, and to supply a workforce for the economic demands of society (Johnson & Sengupta, 2009; Kendall & Taylor, 2008; Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). One simple question to gauge the importance of college for policymakers was to ask them if they felt that college was important for their own children or family.

In fact, all policymakers stated that college was important for their children or families. Seven out of eight policymakers felt that college was also important for children in California (see Table 5). Again, there was a slight contrast between policymakers' thinking regarding college as parents and family members or as policymakers. Specifically, one policymaker said that college was not important for all of the children in California. Andrew did not believe that

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<sup>7</sup> Only seven policymakers answered this question

college was important for all children in California because he wanted to give students the opportunity to pursue their passion. He reasoned:

Because there's certain circumstances where some stud[ents]...and maybe my, my children as well find a passion that their pathway doesn't necessarily need college. I think there's ...fewer and fewer jobs along that way..but there c-, there could be. So they may be a genius at programming and they could just go work for a dot com. So I think college needs to be available as an avenue ...but I don't think it's mandatory that all kids, and it goes back to I think it's our responsibility to prepare them to have that choice, but I do see that there are going to be students that don't need to take that path.

Participants were also shown sibling profiles where one pair of siblings had four-year college degrees and one pair of siblings had vocational degrees that were less than four-year degrees (see Appendix B). When asked if each pair of siblings was successful many participants would not state that the college-educated pair of siblings was more successful than the less educated pair of siblings because they supported broad definitions of success. Interestingly, no policymakers stated that the second set of siblings was more successful. Thus, the frame for college included an idea of it being “important” but “success” is a term that many policymakers were not willing to ascribe solely to those who complete a four-year college degree.

*The Importance of College: Table 5*

	College Important for Own Child/Family	College Important for Children in CA	Siblings Profile Success
Andrew	Yes	No	Not enough information
David	Yes	Yes	Not enough information
Vanessa	Yes	Yes	First pair more successful
Diego	Yes	Yes	First pair more successful
Mariana	Yes	Yes	Both are successful
Soledad	Yes	Yes	Not enough information
Ivan	Yes	Yes	*
James	Yes	Yes	Both are successful

\*No answer to question

Biesta (2009) described three different purposes of education including qualification, socialization, and subjectification. These categories were used to sort the responses of policymakers regarding the importance of college. Seven out of eight policymakers talked about the importance of college in the context of qualification. Some of these same policymakers also described the importance of college in the context of socialization and subjectification. Three of seven policymakers felt that college developed independence, which fits under the description of subjectification (see Table 6). David also spoke about how college mattered for identity formation (subjectification):

It, it begins I mean the last major chunk of formation of who you are as a person... your values, your beliefs, your politics, your, you know, your consumerism, all that kind of stuff I think is the last major formation of that.

Andrew and Vanessa felt that college was important for their children because it would make them productive citizens and advance their learning, respectively. Vanessa talked about the need for college to have a successful and productive society:

Yeah, I think we spoke to that. I think it is important. I think it's the way that we in many ways train our students to be thinkers, train our youth to be thinkers, train people to be participants in, in our society and our culture. That's not to say that if you don't attend college you can't do those things. I think it becomes a little more challenging. I think that,... In many ways, I think it's at the university where you learn what the trends are, future trends are, it will at least bring greater awareness to what you might need to be reading up or thinking about in the future, if, if you're going to be an active participant in, in our society

Additionally, James, Mariana, and Diego thought it would help the workforce/economy (qualification). Soledad and James also talked about the importance of college in the context of socialization and described that it helped social development and to know others (see Table 6).

*Reasons That College is Important for Own Children: Table 6*

	Qualification-Own Children/Family	Socialization--Own Children/Family	Subjectification—Own Children/Family
Andrew	Learning		Independence

	Life Skills		
David			Independence Identity formation
Vanessa	Productive citizen		
Diego	Financial independence		Independence
Mariana	Workforce		
Soledad	Know world	Know others	Know themselves
Ivan	Great equalizer Help others		
James	Economy	Social development	

Although all eight participants felt college was important for their own children not all thought it was important for all children in California. Seven out of eight participants felt that college was important for all children in California. Their reasons varied. All policymakers' frames for the importance of college for their children of California could be categorized under qualification (see Table 7). Only two policymakers described the importance of college in the context of socialization and subjectification when talking about the importance of college for children in California. This is in stark contrast to more policymakers relating college to their own children in the categories of subjectification. This means that when policymakers accessed frames regarding college in relation to their own children there is a greater connection made between individuality and autonomous thinking as opposed to when policymakers think of the children of California. This finding is significant because it showed that policymakers' frames for college are more expansive when thinking about their own children and this could influence their policymaking. For example, if more policymakers framed the importance of college with subjectification as a goal, there could be more educational policies and practices that advance individuality and autonomy.

*Reasons that College is Important for Children in California: Table 7*

	Qualification	Socialization	Subjectification
Andrew	Can Pursue passion without college		

David	Way out of poverty		
Vanessa	Active participants in society, become thinkers		
Diego	Economy Benefits society		
Mariana	Global competition		
Soledad	Know world	Know others	Know self
Ivan	Workforce Help others Great equalizer		
James	Economy	Social Development	

Policymakers were also asked about what they felt the purpose of college was. All<sup>8</sup> policymakers spoke of the purpose of college having to do with qualification or skills (see Table 8). These skills included general learning and career related knowledge. Policymakers also mentioned the purpose as involving preparation for the workforce. James stated:

Purpose of college. I would say it's got multiple purposes... I think to create, help create well rounded people who ... You know, I'm stuck within a political world, so thoughtful participants in a democracy who understand the world around them and can help them find ways to think about and understand people and the economy and what not. I see it as more than just job preparation. Multiple purposes.

Moreover, four out of seven policymakers also talked about the socialization purposes of college as they discussed learning from the experience of others and socially interacting with them. Three out of seven policymakers also discussed subjectification as a college purpose in regards to independence, identity formation, and knowing oneself (see Table 8).

*Purpose of College: Table 8*

	Qualification	Socialization	Subjectification
Andrew	Learning habits, skills for career	Skills through social interaction	Independence
David	Hone field of knowledge for workforce and develop		Formation as person and citizen

<sup>8</sup> Only seven policymakers answered this question

	a love or passion		
Vanessa	Learn to be critical thinkers, diversity of thought	Learn about ethnic/racial diversity	
Diego**			
Mariana	Exposure to multiple viewpoints, continue learning	Learn from others experiences	
Soledad	Create formal learning environments, develop reasoning skills, engage in the workforce, meet needs of society		Engage as a person
Ivan	Create an educated workforce		Enlightenment of young people, let's them figure out who they are
James	Create well rounded people, thoughtful participants in democracy, and understand economy	Understand others	

\*\*Did not answer the question

Thus, when policymakers were asked to activate their college frames involving purpose all thought of qualification skills, a smaller number mentioned socialization, and and even smaller number talked about subjectification purposes.

### **College Related Actions and Decisions**

The types of college related decisions and actions that policymakers discussed in regards to their children included college knowledge, general support, and financial support. Three of seven<sup>9</sup> policymakers spoke about saving money for college as an important decision that they made for their children (see Table 9). Two of seven policymakers discussed the type of college that their child could attend with them and the remaining two discussed the general support they offered their children or family. Many who answered questions about how they came to these decisions stated that they came up with the decisions as a family. When it came to their own decision about college some participants described that they decided what type of college to

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<sup>9</sup> Only seven policymakers answered this question



attend. They also stated that affordability made them choose one college over another. Vanessa said that her parents has limited monies for college and shares what her mother told her:

“You don’t understand. We don’t have money to pay for that.” She said, you know, “You’re not going to be able to go there unless you can pay for it.”

Participants also mentioned professional decisions they made that were college-related.

When policymakers talked about decisions in their professional roles they talked about things such as helping students have choices. David expressed:

And it is to make it available so that people have choices. If you wish to go, it should be done any way. If you don’t wish to go, then you should have exited high school ready to be career ready.

Vanessa shared:

So that was a big one, because it meant challenging, teachers’ discretion and authority and autonomy with grading. It also meant looking at students and what do they need in terms of study skills and, support to get to a level where they’re going to be college ready. Those are difficult, very difficult conversations to have. From my perspective, the iss-, the greater issue was accessibility from the get-go, so from the point where you make, give a fail mark, you’re already excluding this kid from college, so let’s take a look at that. What is the criteria that you’re using? I’m talking about the teachers.

When asked about how her thoughts on college affected her decisions Mariana stated:

I believe that, you know, college and education is the one gift that should be available for each and every student. And so, what has influenced me as to let parents know that nothing should be is beyond their grasp. And so, we’re here to help them and really encourage them that, you know there is hope for all students and an opportunity for all should they still wish to get a college education.

*College Related Actions and Decisions: Table 9*

	For Children/Family	Own Decisions	Professional Decisions
Andrew	Financial support, college knowledge	Type of college	
David	College knowledge	Attending college	Broadening AP classes, college more counselors, college fairs dual enrollment
Vanessa	Financial support, college knowledge	Attending college based on cost	Teacher practices and their effect on college access. College counselor to hire. Also

			examine systemwide practices and speak with policymakers who can change policy
Diego	Financial support	Type of college and major	Focused on getting kids to successfully go on to college or counselors.
Mariana	General support (e.g. moving, etc)	Attending college based on cost	Parent workshops on college
Soledad	College knowledge, general support	Applying to college, financial commitment, figuring out how to do better in college, decide to grad school, choose to dedicate time to school	
Ivan	*	*	*
James	General support	Decision to go to graduate school because family assumed would go to college	K-12 decisions and college decisions such as the education budget and funding allotments, helped elected officials make decisions

### **College Access and Race: Equal and Unequal Educational Outcomes and Opportunities**

Policymakers were asked to make sense of differential educational opportunities and outcomes by race and ethnicity. These series of questions centered on thinking about whether or not graduating and attending college is the same for all racial and ethnic groups and whether or not schools prepare all students for college. Later questions involved explaining gaps in college completion for different racial/ethnic groups as well as why Latinas/os attend different types of colleges. Parts of two theories were used to make sense of the information given by policymakers. First Critical Race Theory was used to center on issues of race within college access, for the purpose of challenging a dominant ideology, and also for focusing on the experiential knowledge of policymakers (Solorzano, 1998).

Second, Bonilla-Silva's (2003/2014) frames for new racism were used to interpret participant answers. These frames include abstract liberalism, naturalization, minimization of race/ethnicity, and cultural racism. Abstract liberalism is where political and economic liberalism is abstractly used to describe racial matters; naturalization is when whites explain racial matters as a natural occurrence; the minimization of racism is when there is the idea that discrimination no longer affects the life chances of minorities; and cultural racism is using culture to detail the position of minorities in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2003/2014). While Bonilla-Silva's research happened with a much larger White sample population, he also discussed how people of color experience these frames of color-blindness. In the current study only three policymakers are White while the remaining five policymakers are Latina/o.

When policymakers were asked if attending and graduating from college was different for White, Asian, African American, and Latina/o students, all agreed except one Latina participant who said that it was not different (see Table 10). Soledad joined the majority and said:

That, you know, children deal with adults who expect them to succeed or fail and I think that might have racial implications whereas depending on the adults at the school that the kids interact with, the kids interact with also a, a history and a political motive that they have to confront and I think that's where there are differences. So if by ... In general because rates of completion or graduation are higher for one population, there could easily be, there could easily be behaviors that cause that to happen, right?

The dissenting participant, Mariana, shared:

I don't think that graduating is, is different. I think what is going to be different is what one does with one's degree.

Mariana used the frame of minimization of racism because she failed to acknowledge that outcomes are racialized. All other policymakers acknowledged that outcomes are racialized. David explained the difference in this way,

Um, for Black and Brown youth the, well, let's put it the other way. For White and Asian youth, there's just a whole sense of unearned family privilege and usually a whole chunk of knowledge that comes... with a certain degree, that privilege that, by and large, other youth do not have.

In this case a policymaker discussed culture in the context of the privilege of certain groups while another discussed institutional racism and classism.

Latina/o policymakers gave more diverse reasons than White when they were asked a general question about differences in college graduation and attendance by race and ethnicity. Latinas/os discussed limited opportunities, differing expectations for students, institutional racism and classism, statistics describing low achievement for African-American and Latina/o students and the educational attainment of Latinas/os. White respondents talked about statistics regarding different achievement for certain racial and ethnic groups and unearned family privilege. In fact, James replied that as a White man he didn't experience differences in graduation and attendance although they probably exist.

*College Graduation and Attendance by Race and Ethnicity: Table 10*

	Graduation Different	Reasons for Differences Graduation and Attendance
Andrew	Yes	Mentions statistics by race and ethnicity
David	Yes	Unearned family privilege
Vanessa	Yes	Mentions statistics by race and ethnicity
Diego	Yes	Opportunities limited Expectations are different (especially for Latinos/AA)
Mariana	No	What happens after one graduates is different
Soledad	Yes	Kids of color deal with institutional racism and classism

Ivan	Yes	Experience different because based off of either cultural sort of premeditations or predispositions about education. If White family has generations of people who have gone to college. That experience is going to be different for that child than a Latino kid whose parents are immigrants, who have little to no education
James	Yes	Probably is but I'm not ... I'm White, and so I don't have that experience.

All participants felt that not all schools prepared students to attend and graduate from college (see Table 11). Five out of eight policymakers spoke about differencing expectations for students. Mariana stated,

... I think it varies greatly. I believe that there are high schools that of which there is not that culture and belief system that all students have a right.

James also talked about how diverse educational stakeholders could help with expectations:

We have lots more teachers and administrators and superintendents and board members who are from diverse backgrounds so they will ... It will tend to set policy, attitudes that hopefully do a better job of making sure that we don't have a presumption that some students can be more successful than others so I think they try. There are probably some places in the state where that may not be the case but I think they try.

Andrew shared that students aren't being sufficiently prepared:

We are not preparing students with the skills they need to be successful in college, so we are not even viewing that as an option so ...I think we're working and we're making progress, but it's not even close to where it should be.

Latina/o policymakers and White policymakers gave similar explanations for why high school preparation differed by race and ethnicity. Many talked about different expectations for students. Mariana talked about these in the context of a college-going culture. Andrew (White policymaker) and Soledad (Latina policymaker) also expressed that academics are not where they need to be (preparation and achievement).

*High School Preparation by Race and Ethnicity: Table 11*

	HS Prepares All Students	Reasons for Differences in HS preparation
Andrew	No	We are not preparing all students
David	No	Schools have different expectations about who is college ready
Vanessa	No	Different expectations, only some students will go to college
Diego	No	Strive to do it, but not there
Mariana	No	College-individual responsibility HS-different school cultures
Soledad	No	Absolutely not. I think, I think the actions of achievement in our schools are the biggest indicator that we don't expect all this.
Ivan	No	Clearly some are doing better than others, but case by case basis.
James	No	We try. We have more diverse teachers, etc. that will hopefully do a better job of making sure that we don't have a presumption that some students can be more successful than others

Across all of the questions related to college access and race in Table 12 we see that most policymakers combine family reasons for gaps in college access with issues related to schools, systems, and policies. Policymakers were asked about differential college outcomes by race and ethnicity displayed on a graph. All policymakers discussed systemic and structural problems<sup>10</sup>. David explained differences in graduation by race and ethnicity in the first graph with a discussion on family expectations:

Second of all is when, where Latina and Latinos go off to college, again, different from Black, Asian or White is when they're stressed at the college which is inevitable, the overwhelming reaction is come back home. You don't have to be there, versus stick it out, versus I'll get you support, versus ... It's a different kind of, of, of things. So, I think that's a, there's a kind of cultural piece about, "Well, if it was next door, I think it'd be okay."

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<sup>10</sup> Only seven policymakers answered this question

Two policymakers discussed language as a potential barrier in the college graduation outcomes of different race and ethnicities in the first graph. Vanessa said:

I think language has some to do with this. I'm just conjecturing, but when you don't understand the language, um, you're automatically, at a disadvantage, and you're excluded - from having the, the information that you need.

Policy related issues mentioned by participants included lack of emphasis on Latina/o achievement nationwide, documentation issues, teacher quality, lack of mentors and of college-going culture and lack of culturally-relevant support. Mariana shared:

I think that, in the past few years, there's been a greater emphasis in ensuring that all students have equal access to a college going culture. So, for whatever reason in education in many schools and school systems that turning the ship around and changing that culture has taken awhile.

White policymakers and Latina/o policymakers gave similar responses when they explained the differences in college graduation by race and ethnicity and Latinas/os attendance at diverse higher educational institutions. Latina/o policymakers explained policy issues such as not speaking the English language and not having culturally-relevant support, socio-economic status, educational systems not serving the needs of students, and the lack of quality in schools, including preparation and teacher quality. One difference between Latina/o policymakers and White policymakers is that Vanessa said that students need mentors. White policymakers described policy issues that were challenges such as language and documentation status, not enough for support or preparation for Latinas/os, and economics. Additionally, David discussed how Latinas/os leave college if they experience hardship and James spoke about how many Latinas/os are first generation college students. Both Latina/o policymakers and White policymakers shared structural frames of understanding when they explained differences in educational outcomes and choices by race and ethnicity.

Policymakers also shared their understandings about why Latinas/os were attending varying higher educational institutions as displayed in the second graph (see Table 12). All<sup>11</sup> policymakers spoke about systemic barriers that affected Latina/o higher education enrollment. Some of these barriers included the affordability of college, university outreach, and admission requirements.

Vanessa responded that family economics and transportation could have an impact. She stated:

A lot of it, I think, may be things like transportation issues, right, so and, and family commitments, and so if all of these students are Latinos, I'm thinking, okay, the average 18-year-old Latino probably lives in a household with at least two other siblings, you know, on average, right? Parents were working, so these students are probably also contributors to household income. They may be working a part-time job. They may be expected to be greater contributors of household income. So I, if I follow along this logic, then I think that they're more inclined to stay at a college or university closer to home.

Soledad shared:

I think the first reason is, dollars. I think working class families make decisions based on what they see they can afford or their comfort level with risk and finances. I think number two is probably proximity to their home. Most families, and this is from my experience as a counselor. You know, they, they feel better being able to access the young person because they don't just give up the kid when they go to college. They do feel responsible and there is a family network that, you know, is there to support them or burden them depending on the... family. And then, um, uh, I also think culture and habits. So, probably between every college they have a wider net of marketing because more people have been there, because they accept more people. You tend to have networks of people who have been there before and then the last piece would be, there is a certain ... You know, the fact that there are Latinos who have been successful in the UC, or, or Catholic schools, you know, the fact that Loyola or Whittier or Mt. Saint Mary's, there, there are these colleges that build a brand with community and then they gain trust and they become their own outreach, you know.

Latina/o policymakers and White policymakers gave similar answers to why Latinas/os were deciding to attend certain colleges. Latina/o and White policymakers discussed items such as college affordability, academics (lack of preparation and admissions requirements), and

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<sup>11</sup> Only six policymakers answered questions



college outreach. Certain differences also emerged between Latina/o and White policymakers when they discussed why Latinas/os attend certain colleges in the second graph. Latina/o policymakers spoke about expectations for Latina/o students, social networks, and transportation to explain Latina/o college choices.

*Response to College Graduation and Attendance Graphs by Race and Ethnicity: Table 12*

	Reasons for Differences in College Attendance Graph #1	Reasons for Differences in Colleges Latinas/os Attendance Graph #2
Andrew	Not preparing students, EL status	Don't have A-G classes; Financial aid for college, lack of exposure to different types of universities
David	Nation not doing enough for Latina/o achievement, Latina/o families kids come back, and documentation	Access, don't know how to get into college and not in household Lack of UC and CSU outreach to Latino community, Not enough college seats
Vanessa	Language Culturally-relevant support College=mentors, parent SES College knowledge	Expectations of teachers, college, high schools Affordability Transportation Admission requirements
Diego	*	*
Mariana	Not all hs have college-going culture Teacher quality	Admissions requirements Documentation of students
Soledad	Need talk about an alignment of needs and services System gap	Affordability for working class families Proximity-close enough for family support, Culture and habits: have greater network of people that have gone to certain colleges Certain colleges build a brand in community
Ivan	Lack of understanding of parents Poverty School preparation College support	*
James	Economics and family history (Latinas/os have more first generation students)	Economics, cc least expensive A-G classes, gateway to UC, CSU, Stanfords and USC's accessibility

\*Didn't answer question

Participants were also asked about the recommendations they would give to have more Latinas/os attend and graduate from college (see Table 13). Andrew stated:

Number 2 is making sure that, I'm a big believer in just peer networks or like just how I've experienced college and been exposed to it through family, or friends, or neighbors.

So having you make sure that's part of the community so people have exposure ...And they can make the decision for themselves and whether that's the path they want to do, but if they don't know about it and they don't know people ...That they trust to talking about then they won't consider that an option.

Participants also spoke about expanding college information to more networks including educating parents and doing broad campaigns about colleges having a seat for every student. In addition, they recommended systemic changes such as having three counselors at each school, having quality instruction as well as and the right administrators and teachers at schools, increasing literacy, making college more affordable, increasing resources to schools with a higher number of low-income and English Learner students, as well as revisiting limits to CSU and UC enrollment.

Diego recommended:

We have to do several things. One is provide high quality instructions for all kids at their individual level while they're with us. And that's including early childhood.

Opportunities before they began kindergarten. Students have to have new, environments at school and at home that, that promote literacy at an early age and provide quality time for reading. And to generate the love of learning early on.

We have to, educate our parents in what it takes for students to be academically successful in school. What it takes for them to support their children financially in preparation for it. And we need to make sure where, that we don't put artificial barriers, females in particular about where they should or shouldn't be going to college.

Sometimes a lot of students want to move out of state and they, you know ...

You're not allowed to and those kinds of things. Um, and then, people have to be able to believe by seeing successful ...other people who have gone through that so that they can be able to relate to that themselves.

White policymakers and Latina/o policymakers described similar recommendations to increase the number of Latina/o students who attend and graduate from college. Both Latina/o and White policymakers discussed items to advance academic preparation and learning and to support families in the college process. White respondents focused more on broad policy issues as opposed to school based issues. This is likely related to the fact that James, who works on statewide issues, was one of the White respondents (see Table 13).

*Types of Recommendation Increase Number of Latinas/os that Attend College: Table 13*

	Type of Recommendations
Andrew	Prepare them for college Make college a part of the community
David	University system-wide campaign around college knowledge and “we have a seat for you”
Vanessa	Three counselors-academic, college, and guidance Wrap around support Include parents more in college process (e.g. college trips)
Diego	Provide high quality instruction Environments at home and school that support literacy Educate parents (academics and finances) No artificial barriers to students moving out of state
Mariana	Mentorships and networks Have the right culture, teaching and administrative staff in high school
Soledad	Teach them all how to read Educate their family about the college process
Ivan	*
James	Make college more affordable; Provide more support services and support for families; revisit question of limits on UC and CSU enrollment

\*Didn't answer question

All policymakers focused on structural and systemic explanations for educational differences in college by race and ethnicity. Interestingly, Latina/o policymakers appeared to be more comfortable talking about reasons why differences in racial and ethnic groups exist when the questions was asked in a general manner. Both, Latina/o and White respondents gave expansive answers about how high schools are not preparing all students equally. Additionally, when Latina/o and White policymakers were shown graphs showing college attendance and graduation by race and ethnicity, White policymakers were able to give more expansive answers about why these trends were happening. Perhaps, having the actual graphs on paper facilitated the discussion of race, ethnicity, and educational differences and inequalities.

## **Conclusion**

All policymakers understood college as important for their children and most felt that it was also important for children in the state of California. Many policymakers wanted their children to attend a four-year college, but didn't want to generalize the type of college that all students in the state should attend. In fact, most policymakers felt that students should have a choice about whether or not they want to attend college. Policymakers valued college because of the skills and job benefits it provided, and also talked about the social development and independence that college advanced. When policymakers talked about issues relating to educational opportunities, college, and race/ethnicity they gave mostly structural and systemic reasons for differences. Additionally, White policymakers talked more expansively about differences in attending and graduation from college when they were shown graphs that illustrated college attendance and graduation rather than having a broad conversation about racial and ethnic differences in these educational outcomes.

## **Chapter 6: Comparing Latina/o Immigrant Parents' and Policymakers' Frames**

Examining and comparing the cognitive frames of Latina/o immigrant parents and policymakers clarifies differences and similarities that can be used to shape better college access policies and practices for Latinas/os. Each group's particular strengths, concerns and vested interests provide a balanced look at education, politics and family values. In examining the college frames of policymakers and immigrant Latina/o parents, several understandings and beliefs regarding college were revealed. The following research questions were asked of both groups:

- 1) What are Latina/o parents' cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?
- 2) What are policymakers cognitive frames regarding college?  
How do they frame the value and purpose of college, who belongs there, and why there is a college access problem?  
What factors influence the creation of these frames?  
What role does race play in any of these understandings and conceptualizations?
- 3) Do the members of each of these groups have important conceptual framing similarities or differences?

### **Defining the College Experience and College**

One major difference between policymakers and immigrant parents was that all policymakers had attended and graduated from college, while none of the immigrant Latina/o parents had attended college. Consequently, when discussing college, policymakers talked about their own experiences while immigrant parents talked about the experiences of children or family

members who had gone to college or what they heard about college. Jorge, a parent, described his two daughters experiences in college:

Buenas, se aprende mucho y se crece mucho. Con la experiencia de mis dos hijas que ya fueron, especialmente la que fue a los cuatro años, la universidad es así – fue muy buena, muy buena; se aprende mucho y crecen mucho las personas.

Good, you learn a lot and you grow a lot. With the experience of my two daughters that attended, especially the one that when to a four-year, college is like that-it was very good, very good; you learn a lot and people grow a lot.

Policymakers' experiences with college also gave them more detailed ways to describe their education including sharing the qualification and socialization aspects of college. One policymaker, Andrew stated:

I enjoyed it because it just started to instill study habits and continuous learning and just exposing myself to new fields...And then my last years I focused on a track for business and so then I was more into business school that was more regimented than just business skills and learning.

Moreover, all parents viewed college in a positive light, while one policymaker discussed the challenges she faced as a first generation Latina in higher education.

When relaying their own college experiences, immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers were asked to name sources for their college information. There were similarities between where policymakers and immigrant parents received their college information. For example, both groups used their social networks to gather college-related information, although for policymakers these sources had much more experience with college. These networks include their own children. Both also turned to schools, relying on programs and staff such as counselors. Additionally both groups cited media as a source for college information. One large difference is that policymakers had a higher number of sources of college information. Policymakers also mentioned their jobs, research, universities, communities, and advocates as sources. As a result, policymakers' overarching frames for college may be enacted or influenced by a higher number

of sources than those of immigrant Latina/o parents. Moreover, since policymakers rely on more knowledgeable sources for college information, such as research, university representatives, and high school counselors, than immigrant parents, they may be receiving vastly different information than the social networks of Latina/o immigrant parents provide. For example, while both Latina/o parents and policymakers speak about research, Latina/o parents go to the Internet to seek out information, while policymakers can talk to staff that have reports and other documentation containing college information.

Policymakers and parents also responded by sharing their thoughts on the sources of college information for other parents. A comparison was made between how the policymakers gather college knowledge and how they understood that other parents gather college knowledge. In determining the different college information sources that policymakers use compared to what they perceived to be other parents' sources one could identify whether or not Latino/o parents and policymakers considered themselves uniquely positioned to receive more college knowledge than the general population. Further, in comparing the answers of Latina/o parents and policymakers a fuller picture was given of what college resources were believed to be available to all Latina/o parents. These college resources might serve to deepen or enact frames for college and as such it is essential to understand how Latina/o parents and policymakers receive college information.

Policymakers reported more sources of college information than the general population of parents. Both Latina/o immigrant parents and policymakers cited similar sources for other parents, which included parents, schools, and the Internet. Parents described college visits, sports, and brochures as additional sources for other parents while policymakers described books, own experience, family, friends, and neighborhoods. Again, policymakers described a higher number

of sources where parents were looking for college information than immigrant parents detailed in their answers

Immigrant parents and policymakers had different experiences to draw upon when calling on their beliefs, understandings, and values, or frames, about college. Immigrant parents drew on the experiences of their children, while policymakers drew on their own experiences. Additionally, policymakers had a higher number and more knowledgeable sources of information to draw upon. This resulted in more nuanced frames of the overarching idea of college by policymakers.

### **Quality of College**

When reporting their thoughts on various aspects regarding the quality of college, policymakers and immigrant Latina/o parents shared several basic ideas. First, while most parents thought that some colleges were better than others, a higher majority of policymakers than parents felt that some colleges were better when compared to other colleges. Second, most immigrant parents and policymakers picked four-year colleges for their children when asked generally about what type of college they wanted their children to attend. Ana, a parent, explained:

Es un poco pues complicado a veces decidiera a cuál universidad quisiera que fueran sus hijos. Yo quisiera que fueran a las mejores, una que es donde tú estás, UCLA, otra pues es como te dije, Harvard también me gustaría que alguno tuviera el interés de ir y la capacidad de poder asistir ahí. Hay muchas, como también Georgetown, también Yale, se pronuncia, no sé si se pronuncie Yale.

It's a little complicated sometimes to decide what university you would like your children to attend. I would like them to go to the best, like the one where you are, UCLA, another is like I said before, Harvard, I would like one of them [children] to have the interest and capacity to attend there. There are many, such as Georgetown, also Yale, I don't know if you pronounce it Yale.



Immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers were also shown specific college profiles that included a community college, a college from the California State University School System, a college from the University of California system, and a small private liberal arts college (see Appendix). Both immigrant parents and policymakers gave open-ended answers such as “it depends” when asked about what type of college other students or children should go to. With the college profiles, there was an even split within each group of participants who thought that students should attend a four-year college or who gave an open-ended answer.

Ivan, a policymaker, stated:

I'm a big believer in our UC and our CSU schools. We need to do a better job of making sure those schools are for our local kids, particularly the UC schools. I think the CSU schools do a good job of that. Mostly it's local kids who come. The UC system has gotten away a little bit too much from focusing on their mission, which is to serve California residents.

Interestingly, no policymakers chose community colleges for their own children or children in the state based on the college profiles, while three immigrant parents did choose community college for their own children and two chose community college for children in the neighborhood. It seems that the profiles slightly shifted parents' answers and policymakers' answers as well. Policymakers were more likely to choose a four-year college for their own children after reading the profiles while parents were less likely to do so before reading the profiles. Policymakers may have changed their minds when they noticed how low the transfer rate was for the community college described in the profile. Policymakers that are well versed in the importance of transferring to a four-year college may have felt less willing to send their children to a community college where they might or might not transfer to a four-year college.

This may also have to do with the importance of the differences noticed between college in relation to parents and policymakers. Differences that immigrant parents noticed included

cost, acceptance rates, location/dormitory options, graduation rates, and number of students while policymakers also noted cost, degrees offered, graduation rates, public/private affiliation, whether it was a two year or four year college, acceptance rates, location, and size. Still one parent said that they chose community college because of cost. Another parent was scared away by the low acceptance rate of college #3. It appears that cost could be more of an issue for the low-income Latina/o parents in the study than it was for policymakers. Additionally, low acceptance rates may signal selectivity for policymakers, but for parents it signals more difficulty to get in and may intimidate them.

For most immigrant parents and policymakers there are differences in the quality of colleges. Their frames for the quality of college include some colleges being better than others. The frame also included different types of colleges being preferred to others. Most immigrant parents and policymakers chose four-year colleges for their own children. If it follows that most parents would choose the best colleges for their own children/family then it seems that four-year colleges are more likely to be chosen than other kinds of colleges. Most specifically, in the college profiles three of the options were four-year colleges, and one option was a two-year community college. Another important finding was that when both immigrant parents and policymakers were asked to choose colleges for students who were not their children/family, many chose to give vague answers and some even changed their answers from one kind of college to another. Thus, for several immigrant parents and policymakers, the frame for quality for their own children/family was different than that for the general public. The difference in frames can relate to the greater distance that other children have from Latina/o immigrant parents and policymakers than their own children. This is essential to analyze because parents want the

best for their own children and the further they see themselves from the children they are making college decisions for the less critical it could be for them to want the best in relation to college.

### **Who Belongs In College: Choice, Equity, and Differentiation**

Both immigrant parents and policymakers were asked to respond to questions about who should go to college. In a previous study, this question was asked to influential Californians and three frames emerged: equity, choice, and differentiation (Rogers, Bertrand, & Perez, 2012). A significant finding is that no immigrant Latina/o parents or policymakers called for differentiation when they thought about who should go to college. One large difference is that most policymakers had the frame for “choice” while most parents had the frame for “equity.” Policymakers did not want to make decisions for all people while parents believed that college would be beneficial to everyone. An immigrant parent, Esperanza, talked about everyone going to college in the statement below:

Yo pienso que todos deberían de ir, deberíamos de ir porque es un mejor futuro para todos, incluyo hasta para todo el país.

I think that everyone should go, we should go because it is a better future for all of us, including for the entire country.

Meanwhile Diego, a policymaker, explained his frame for choice this way:

All students should be given the opportunity to go and be successful. Then, make the decision. I would not say that I would ever want to be in a position that's determining who goes. That'd have to be a student, that decision ultimately. Our job is to make sure that it is a parent-student decision and, not an adults' decision, that's either a teacher or a counselor...

Diego, hesitates to transfer his frame for college going to other children because he is afraid he is overstepping his bounds. This reluctance relates to significant distance he has from all of the children in California.

Immigrant parents and policymakers also shared what they thought the ideal college student looked like. For many immigrant parents and policymakers, motivation and effort described an ideal college student. Meanwhile, several policymakers discussed academic skills and learning when they described a college student while immigrant parents didn't. These differences might relate to why most Latina/o parents have an equity frame, while most policymakers have a choice frame. Since parents believe that motivation and effort are what can make students successful in college this can mean that a broader pool of students can attend college. In contrast, since several policymakers discussed academics this could lead them to reduce the pool of students who they imagine would attend college because not all students are academically ready.

There was a significant difference in the frames for who should go to college when it came to immigrant parents and policymakers. Most parents were more inclusive and stated that everyone should go to college, or the equity frame for college. Meanwhile, most policymakers were wary of making the decisive statement that everyone should go to college, they preferred the frame of choice when talking about who should go to college. This likely relates the distance between policymakers and the children in California.

### **Value and Purpose of College**

All immigrant parents and policymakers believed that college was important for their children. Most immigrant parents and policymakers believed that college was important for the children in California. Biesta's (2009) categories for the purpose of education (qualification, socialization, and subjectification) were used to sort answers about the importance and value of college. Both immigrant parents and policymakers believed that college was important for their children because of the knowledge and skills they acquired (qualification). Meanwhile

socialization called for items such as learning about diversity and others. Lastly, subjectification talked about the purpose of education being about enlightenment, formation of a person, and independence. Emilia, an immigrant parent, stated that college was important for her children because of the jobs they would obtain:

Porque yo pienso que la universidad son las llaves de las puertas que no son visibles, pero te van a ayudar a abrir muchas puertas, con el estudio de la universidad tú vas a poder llegar muy lejos; porque no es lo mismo el sueldo de una persona que limpia casas a una maestra o un doctor. La universidad son las llaves para que tú abras las puertas del éxito.”

Because I think that college is the key to open the doors that are not visible, but it will help you open many doors, with study in college you will be able to go very far; because it's not that same the wages for a person who cleans houses or a teacher or a doctor. College is the key for you to open the door for success.

Unlike immigrant parents, several policymakers also mentioned independence as an important reason for college.

Moreover, while immigrant parents used mostly knowledge and skills to explain the importance of college for their own children and children in their neighborhood, policymakers used socialization and subjectification much more as purposes for college when they were talking about their own children. A policymaker David relates the importance of college to identity formation:

It, it begins I mean the last major chunk of formation of who you are as a person... your values, your beliefs, your politics, your, you know, your consumerism, all that kind of stuff I think is the last major formation of that.

Immigrant parents and policymakers were shown a profile of college educated siblings with jobs that required four-year college degrees and a pair of siblings with some post secondary training with jobs that do not require four-year college degrees. Most immigrant parents believed that the college educated siblings were more successful. An immigrant parent, Esperanza shared her thoughts on what pair of siblings was successful:

Sí, la primera pareja sí tienen éxito...porque estudiaron en universidad. [Segundo par de hermanos] No estudiaron y están en más bajas posiciones. Creo que los exitosos son los primeros.

Yes, the first pair are successful...because they studied in the university. [Second set of siblings] Did not study and are in lower positions. I think that first ones are successful.

In comparison, policymakers were almost equally divided between there not being enough information to make a decision, stating that both are successful, or responding that the first pair is successful. No immigrant parents or policymakers believed that the second pair of siblings was more successful. This finding is important because even though success can be broadly defined, the thinking of both policymakers and Latina/o immigrant parents reflects the understanding that there is value added by the completion of a four-year college education.

In addition to being asked about the importance of college and comparing the success of college-educated versus non-college educated siblings, respondents relayed their ideas of what the purpose of education is. Most immigrant parents and policymakers detailed that the purpose of college involved acquiring knowledge and skills (qualification). Included in qualification was knowledge and skills such as getting ready for the workforce and learning. Elena, who was one of the parents that talked about jobs shared:

El objetivo es, pues, buscar un buen trabajo para ganar un buen, buen dinero. Y, y pues, salir adelante cuando están jóvenes y para el futuro. Después para sus hijos también.

The purpose is, well, to find a good job and earn good, good money. And, well, to progress when you are young and for the future. Afterwards, for your children too.

One of the policymakers, James, stated the purpose of college as knowledge and skills as well (qualification). He said:

Purpose of college. I would say it's got multiple purposes...I think to create, help create well rounded people who ... You know, I'm stuck within a political world, so thoughtful participants in a democracy who understand the world around them and can help them

find ways to think about and understand people and the economy and what not. I see it as more than just job preparation. Multiple purposes.

Immigrant parents and policymakers all believed that college was important for their children. Additionally, most believed that it was important for children in their neighborhoods or in the state. Thus, Latina/o parents' and policymakers' frames or deep understandings regarding college identify it as important in the lives of their children and other young people. The reasons for this were mostly because of the knowledge and skills that college brings. Many of these skills were explained in the context of the job market. Several policymakers did have an additional idea of independence being gained when they talked about reasons why their own children/family should go to college. Policymakers were also more likely to include the idea of socialization and subjectification when discussing the purpose of college, while most immigrant parents still mentioned knowledge and skills. Thus, even though their respective frames for the value and purpose of college were similar in placing importance on college and highlighting the qualification purposes of college, more policymakers included socialization and subjectification in their frames.

### **College Related Decisions and Actions**

Both immigrant parents and policymakers offered their children/family financial support, college knowledge, and moral support. For immigrant parents and policymakers, college knowledge included taking their children on college trips. Parents also asked questions about college to gather information for their children. A parent Paulina shared:

Pues que lo he llevado a buscar ayuda como aquí a la escuela \_\_\_ con el Señor \_\_\_\_, que está en el centro universitario. Después lo llevé con otra persona que era del colegio de Santa Mónica para que lo guiara, y lo llevé con otra muchachita que vive por aquí, es hija de una amiga, que da las clases de ayuda financiera en \_\_\_. Lo he llevado, pero ahorita no sé si ahorita ya va a calificar para este semestre porque él pagó lo que le tocó este año, pero también al muchachito que está en el 11, estoy en comunicación porque él está con

ayuda especial, pero igual, él con sus buenas calificaciones, estamos en contacto con las maestras y una persona que lo apuntó para ir a [Local Community College].

Well I have taken him to search for help in the (high school he attends) with (his counselor) who is in the college center. After, I took him to another person from Santa Monica so that they could guide him, and I took him with another young woman who lives around here, the daughter of a friend, who does the financial aid classes at (the high school he attends). I have taken him but now I think he will qualify this semester because he paid what he needed to this year, but also for my son in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, I'm in communication because he needs special help, but with his good grades, we are in contact with the teachers and a point person at [Local Community College].

Both immigrant parents and policymakers also offered their children/family moral support in the form of encouragement or general support. Although both immigrant parents offered their children/family college knowledge, the policymakers offered more information than parents. Policymakers were able to actually discuss different types of colleges, and help children/family with test preparation and admissions essays. When it came to financial support, several policymakers had already saved away money for their own children in a college fund.

When immigrant parents and policymakers shared their thoughts on how they help their children/family with college, many talked about going on college trips and speaking to those at the school site. One interesting difference is that what it means to help your children/family was more expansive for policymakers, most likely because they had attended college and have more college knowledge than the immigrant parents in my study.

### **College Access and Race**

There were some similarities and major differences between policymakers and immigrant parents' understandings of college access and race. Latina/o parents and policymakers were also asked about their understandings regarding the fairness in existing educational systems. While most immigrant parents responded that high school prepares students to attend and graduate from



college, all policymakers said that it does not. Esperanza, an immigrant parent described school preparation for college this way:

Ahorita he escuchado que muchas escuelas están, no sé de todas, pero he escuchado a la middle school que iba mi hijo, estaban puchandolo mucho siempre. Incluso ahí era, su salón era una universidad.”

Now I’ve heard that many schools are, I don’t know if all, but I’ve heard that the middle school where my son went was pushing him always. His classroom was even a college.

In contrast, a policymaker, discussed why preparation is different: Mariana stated:

I think it varies greatly. I believe that there are high schools that of which there is not that culture and belief system that all students have a right.

Immigrant parents felt that schools are there to prepare their children, while policymakers acknowledged systemic issues like lack of preparation by the schools. When it came to deciding whether or not college attendance and graduation varies for different races and ethnicities, most immigrant parents and policymakers said that it does (see Table 8). The reasons behind differences in graduation were dissimilar for immigrant parents and policymakers. Immigrant parents talked more about how Latinas/os lack information and that they don’t do as well as other groups like Asians, at times because of intelligence. One parent Paulina shared:

Pues diferente en el modo que es un orgullo porque a los latinos nos tienen por más ignorantes, pero yo sé que no somos; simplemente porque hay papás también que están ignorantes, y no saben cómo guiar a los hijos pienso yo, porque no se informan, es falta de información, pero todos pueden ir.

Well it’s different the way that one is proud because for Latinos they peg us as ignorant, but I know we are not; simply because there are parents also that are ignorant and they don’t know how to guide their children and because they don’t inform themselves, it’s the lack of information, but all can go.

When immigrant parents illustrated systemic issues, they referred to items such as how the school system doesn’t favor Latina/o students. For policymakers, differences in graduation for diverse racial and ethnic groups could be explained by a whole range of systemic issues

including institutional racism and classism; unearned family privilege; limited opportunities; and generational education in racial groups such as Whites. Soledad, a policymaker stated:

That, you know, children deal with adults who expect them to succeed or fail and I think that might have racial implications whereas depending on the adults at the school that the kids interact with, the kids interact with also a, a history and a political motive that they have to confront and I think that's where there are differences. So if by ... In general because rates of completion or graduation are higher for one population, there could easily be, there could easily be behaviors that cause that to happen, right?

Immigrant parents and policymakers were also shown charts and gave comments on them.

One chart showed the college graduation rates of Latina/os, African-Americans, Asians, and Whites in California. The second chart showed that attendance rates of Latina/o students at different types of colleges within California. Immigrant parents explained differences in the first chart by discussing how Latinas/os lack information and may conform to not attending or finishing college. They also discussed how teachers and neighborhoods make a difference in who goes to college. In contrast, while policymakers explained differences in the first chart by pointing to lack of parent understanding, they detailed a greater number of systemic issues such as lack of preparation for students, English Learner status, documentation, and economics.

Vanessa, a policymaker shared that:

I think language has some to do with this. I'm just conjecturing, but when you don't understand the language, you're automatically, at a disadvantage, and you're excluded - from having the, the information that you need.

When giving statements about the second chart, Latina/o parents believed that Latinas/os attend certain colleges because of cost or because it's an easier route. Parents also said that admissions requirements make a difference as well as competing with other students who may be better well prepared. Policymakers explained differences mostly in systemic terms describing how cost, proximity, admissions requirements, documentation, teacher expectations, and college outreach make a difference. Vanessa shared again:

A lot of it, I think, may be things like transportation issues, right, so and, and family commitments, and so if all of these students are Latinos, I'm thinking, okay, the average 18-year-old Latino probably lives in a household with at least two other siblings, uh, you know, on average, right? Parents were working, so these students are probably also contributors to household income. They may be working a part-time job. They may be expected to be greater contributors of household income. So I, if I follow along this logic, then I think that they're more inclined to stay at a college or university closer to home."

Lastly, immigrant parents and policymakers gave their final recommendations about how to get more Latinas/os to attend and graduate from college. For immigrant parents, parent education and involvement, publicity via school and media, and more money were important. Meanwhile, policymakers recommended educational campaigns, high quality instruction, literacy, revisiting college requirements, and educating parents. While both immigrant parents and policymakers discussed educating parents and school based improvements, policymakers did take their recommendations to a broader level in discussing changing college requirements and doing an educational campaign across California. A policymaker Andrew stated:

I'm a big believer in just peer networks or like just how I've experienced college and been exposed to it through family, or friends, or neighbors. So having you make sure that's part of the community so people have exposure ...And they can make the decision for themselves and whether that's the path they want to do, but if they don't know about it and they don't know people ...That they trust to talking about then they won't consider that an option.

Exploring the frames that immigrant parents and policymakers have regarding college access and race revealed several interesting differences. Overall, immigrant parents did not see differences in the way that students were being prepared for college while policymakers noted several differences and inequalities. This means that most immigrant parents believe that their schools are preparing their children for college, while no policymakers believe that all schools do this for all students. Moreover, although most immigrant parents and policymakers said there were differences in graduation rates for different racial and ethnic groups, immigrant parents reasoned that parents and the schools were at fault while policymakers gave answers that

connected to overarching state policies as well. This speaks to parents' emphasis on individual responsibility when it comes to schooling rather than focusing on systems and policies like policymakers. When presented with more specific charts of the differences in college graduation for different racial and ethnic groups as well as Latina/os in higher education, one reason cited by both groups was cost. Again, policymakers gave many reasons related to larger policies as well. Unfortunately, some Latina/o parents relied on the cultural racism frames that Bonilla-Silva (2003/2014) talked about and called Latinas/os conformist or explained that Asians are smarter as a way to explain differences.

### **Conclusion**

Immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers indicated several similarities and differences when disclosing their frames for college. First, Latina/o parents and policymakers have frames that place a high importance on college. While Latina/o parents emphasize the relation of college to increased employment opportunities, policymakers also describe the value of college as being tied to independence and building relationships. Second, most Latina/o parents and policymakers would like their children to attend four-year colleges, yet policymakers held more strongly to this idea than Latina/o parents when given several college options such as community colleges. Latina/o parents and policymakers changed their ideas of the types of colleges that other children should attend, most likely because of the distance between themselves and other children that are not their own. Third, many Latina/o parents assigned blame to parents and students for differences in educational quality and attainment. This is in stark contrast to policymakers who emphasized structural reasons for differences in educational attainment. Fourth, Latina/o parents relied on sources for college information that had less college knowledge than the sources of policymakers. Lastly, while most Latina/o parents

highlighted equity and motivation as their frames for who should attend college or the ideal college student, several policymakers highlighted choice and academics when describing whom they envision as ideal college students or those who should attend college. The similarities and differences between Latina/o immigrant parents and policymakers are significant because their varying cognitive frames serve influence how they interpret diverse college-related information, actions, structures, practices, and experiences.

## Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

### Introduction

My research began by posing questions about the cognitive frames, or mental constructs and deep understandings, that immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers have about the value and purpose of college, who belongs in college, and the reason for gaps in college completion for Latinas/os. These mental frames were analyzed through semi-structured interviews with 18 study participants. Through multiple questions relating to college, respondents shared their stories and, in doing so, revealed the meanings they attach to various aspects of college. There were similarities and differences in these understandings of college across immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers.

### Main Findings

#### *Deep Frames for the Importance of College and Emerging/Shallow Frames for College Quality*

One of the significant findings in my study is that both Latina/o parents and policymakers have frames that place a high importance on college. Latina/o parents value college because of the job opportunities that a college education provides. Parents believe their children and children in the neighborhood will have better employment opportunities than they have experienced without a college degree. Meanwhile, policymakers value college for their children and children in the state because of their own positive experiences with college and the economic, social, and individual benefits that they believe it will bring.

While the importance of college and the purpose for college was clear for immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers, what wasn't as clear is how members of each group interpret college quality. For some Latina/o parents, it was challenging to define why one college was better than another. In contrast, policymakers held more reasons for why one college was better

than another. Furthermore, most immigrant Latina/o parents who initially expressed an interest in having their children attend a four-year college held this same goal even after they were presented with actual college profiles (community college, four-year college in CSU or UC system, or private college). Yet, two parents shifted their preference from four-year colleges to community colleges after being exposed to the scenarios. Meanwhile, no policymakers who chose a four-year college for their children/family shifted to a community college after being presented with college profiles. In fact, two who had previously stated that they wanted community colleges or four-year colleges, shifted to a vague answer or a four-year college. What this means is that when presented with profiles, some immigrant parents found community colleges more desirable, though no policymakers did. Also, both parents and policymakers for the most part stuck to their initial preferences. The stickiness of the college choice for their own children/family demonstrates that many Latina/o parents and policymakers have deep frames for where they want their children/family to attend college.

In contrast, when immigrant Latina/o parents were asked what colleges they wanted children in their neighborhoods to attend, more of them gave vague answers for the types of colleges they should attend or shifted from one type of college to another after reviewing the college profiles. Similarly, many policymakers gave vague answers when asked what type of college children in the state should attend and changed their minds about what type of college after reviewing the college profiles. This vagueness and change of choice for college for immigrant parents may be related to the fact that Latina/o parents are more removed from children in their neighborhood than their own children and hence their frames for college quality relative to neighborhood children are not as deep. The same could be said for policymakers who

are even further removed from students in the state. In fact, the distance is even further than that of Latina/o parents and neighborhood children.

This means that most Latino/a immigrant parents' frames regarding the importance of college for their own children are deeply held and tied to their own experiences. Yet, some immigrant parents have much less developed understandings that are more easily changed. For instance, one parent initially wanted her child to attend UCLA but when presented with actual college profiles chose a community college for her child. Meanwhile, for policymakers the importance of college and college quality for their children are deeper, unchanging frames. For example, no policymakers chose a community college for their own children/family when forced to choose between four-year and two-year colleges in the college profiles. Yet, the frames that they have for children across the state are varied and shallow.

#### *College Access and Race: Individual Responsibility Frames Versus Systems Change Frames*

Another significant conclusion is that Latina/o parents were more likely to frame access issues on individual problems. Latina/o parents assign blame to individual parents and students for the relatively low college-going rates of Latina/o students as opposed to more systemic issues. Latina/o parents, to some extent, also blamed schools, but very few talked about larger issues such as racism affecting educational outcomes for different races and ethnicities. On the other hand, policymakers framed access issues as systemic. Policymakers focused more on systemic policy issues to describe educational outcomes for different races and ethnicities. Policymakers discussed the importance of parents, but moved beyond placing the blame on them and schools. Policymakers' frames for schools and colleges included the need for systemic changes such as support for families, more resources, and greater access, to name a few. While immigrant Latina/o parents focused on more individual reasons behind unequal educational outcomes,



policymakers looked at the macro educational landscape. This difference can most likely be attributed to Latina/o immigrant parents not attending schools in the U.S. as well as not being informed about policies and practices beyond their children's schools. Additionally, racism in the contemporary U.S. can be described as subtle. New types of racism like color-blindness are difficult to pinpoint and may present themselves very differently than in the country of origin of the Latina/o parents. Moreover, the frame for meritocracy can be heard in parents talking about how student success depends entirely on individual effort. Liu (2011) explores this idea of meritocracy in the United States and unpacks how meritocracy doesn't truly exist in the context of higher education.

*Parents and Policymakers Use Experience to Shape Frames, Sources for Policymakers More Informed*

Latina/o parents and policymakers had different sources for shaping their frames about college. Parents relied on their social networks such as other parents at the schools and family members who went to college for much of their college information. Parents also relied on their own experiences and the experiences of their children to make sense of college. These same parents also attended parent programs at schools and went on college trips to gather more college-related information. While policymakers also used their social networks to talk about college, they cited sources rich in college knowledge such as their own jobs, university staff and representatives, and research as places where they received their information. Policymakers also cited their own experiences as sources of information. It appears that parents' frames for college were developed through what they gathered through their own experiences (hearing about college, their own hardships), social networks and schools, while policymakers could refer to their own college experiences, employment, college representatives, and research to shape their

multiple frames regarding college. These diverse sources of college information resulted in many policymakers having more nuanced understandings of college than parents did.

### *Frames for Choice and Equity*

Although they have less information about the details involved with a college education, more Latina/o parents than policymakers would like everyone to go to college. Policymakers largely supported the idea of students choosing to go to college. Latina/o parents talked about ideal college students being motivated and working hard. In comparison, policymakers talked about ideal students having characteristics such as motivation as well, but also spoke about the importance of each student having the desire and ability to learn. Perhaps, parents have a greater frame for access in college because they believe that if students try hard enough they can be successful. While this kind of equity frame is useful for expanding who goes to college, the focus on the individual may complicate understandings of systemic inequalities in the United States that have nothing to do with individual effort. For policymakers, there is more recognition that skills matter for college and that not all students should be forced to go to college, but rather it should be a choice.

### **Recommendations**

#### Policy

My study illustrates how important college is for Latina/o parents and policymakers. Although past surveys have shown that parents value higher education these interviews explain how deeply valued college is and how it is tied to the idea of a better life. Latina/o parents may not have as much information as policymakers about the nature of differences across colleges and why some may be better suited for their children. My study indicates that policies that aim to increase college access for Latinas/os should include more information for parents about the

different types of college that children can attend along with indicators to measure quality (e.g. college graduation rates). Indicators could also include enrollment in graduate school, average amount of loans taken, drop-out rates, and job placement to engage parents in discussions about how diverse colleges result in differing educational, social, and economic benefits for their children. Latina/o parents want the best college for their children. Policies should be crafted to guide parents in figuring out what the “best” college means. A policy to create a parent-friendly rubric that measures broad aspects of college quality and is presented during a series of parent or community workshops could be useful. Additionally, since “best” might prove to be a more expensive option, policies to increase financial aid to low-income students should be created and publicized to broaden college options for low-income Latina/o parents. The importance of cost was captured well when one parent changed their preference from a four-year college to a community college because of the difference in tuition.

Meanwhile, policymakers for the most part want their own children to attend a four-year college, but do not hold this same goal for all children in California. Perhaps, the distance between a policymaker’s children or family is too far removed from other Californians but there is something important about policymakers wanting what is good enough for their children for the rest of the state as well. There should be more candid conversations amongst policymakers about the different types of colleges and why each college is a better fit for “certain” type of students so that biased or incorrect assumptions can be challenged. Since many Latina/o parents and policymakers want their children to attend college, it is important that policies continue to expand the higher education system in California so that we have enough seats for all students. Policies also need to bring more college preparatory courses to high school to ensure that all of our students are prepared to go to college.

Additionally, Latina/o parents need a better understanding about systemic issues that are occurring within their schools. It is important to note that in my study, most immigrant parents were unaware of inequalities in educational opportunities. They can gain this information from schools if policies are in place to make this kind of information available through parent programs at school sites. Parents can learn more about how policies affect their children's educational opportunities. My results describe how Latina/o parents who lack information about systemic educational issues blame themselves or other parents for the educational outcomes of students. This is problematic because it reinforces deficit views of Latina/o parents. It is important to note that all 10 of my parent participants were Latina/o parents who cared very much about their children going to college, even though some of these same Latina/o parents illustrate ideas that speak about Latina/o parents needing to care more about their children going to college.

### Practice

The findings from my study indicate that Latina/o parents care about their children's education. The study also points to the need for Latina/o parents to have more college information to shape their frames about different aspects of college. This college knowledge should be available to parents at the K-12 level. One way that this could be accomplished is through a greater number of college counselors at the high school level. There should be a more manageable ratio of students to counselor to ensure that students are sufficiently counseled regarding their college options. Additionally, counselors should have the necessary training to provide the most complete and current college knowledge to their students. Teachers should also be given professional development about the parents they are working with so they can understand that many Latina/o parents place a high value on college, but for those parents who

have not attended schools or college in the U.S., there is a learning curve where they are still figuring out specific details about what colleges are best for their children.

Lastly, in my study, most Latina/o parents see college as a place for everyone. Meanwhile, policymakers talk more about choosing to go to college and how college is a place for students need to want to learn and be academically prepared for college. Expanded learning support for students at schools would address the policymakers' concerns with closing academic gaps for students who want to go to college. Support services could also address Latina/o parents idea of college being a place for all children, including their own.

### **Significance**

My research is significant for education policy because it offers deeper insight into the understandings that Latina/o parents and policymakers have regarding college. In analyzing the cognitive frames of Latina/o parents and policymakers one can better grasp what anchors the college meanings that are derived from each group. Understanding the cognitive frames of Latina/o parents will allow for teachers, community organizations, and policymakers to identify with what this population understands about college and what they want for their own children. Examining the cognitive frames of policymakers is significant as well because they create policies that will affect the college going opportunities for Latinas/os students.

### **Limitations of the Study**

My study had several limitations. First, recruiting parents and policymakers was challenging. I went to several locations including a Back to School Night, a football game, and a supermarket to recruit parents. It was difficult to get parents to agree to be interviewed because of their busy schedules and also because I didn't have an existing relationship with them. Moreover, I had a small budget and I wasn't able to offer a large monetary incentive to have them participate in my

research. Additionally, because I had a bounded geographic region and population sample this narrowed the pool of participants that I was able to include in my study.

In addition to the immigrant Latina/o parents in my study, I also planned to interview immigrant Latina/o parents who were members of a parent organization within my study site. While I was able to complete a few of these interviews, I was unable to get the sufficient number to provide a different analysis than the Latina/o immigrant parents that I already had. Further, I didn't learn enough about the level or depth of engagement of members in the parent organization. Consequently, I was not able to distinguish parents who had only attended one or two meetings from core members, and this made it very difficult to analyze the responses of these members.

For policymakers, the challenge was also getting them to agree to an interview with me in spite of their busy schedules. District officials were much more responsive than local and state elected officials. After several rounds of phone calls, visiting offices, and letters I was unable to interview the number of policymakers that I had intended to interview.

### **Future Research**

Future research with cognitive frames could include U.S. born Latina/o parents because they may have a different understanding of college since they were born in the United States. Latinas/os parents who attended school in the U.S. are likely to have different ideas about education than parents who attended school outside of the U.S. Research could also include examining the cognitive frames of teachers and Latina/o students as these are two important populations when it comes to college access for Latina/o students. Assessing teachers' understanding about college can be used to inform policies and practices to improve college access. It also would be important to understand Latina/o students college frames as this would

allow for a more nuanced view about how Latinas/os youth think about college and perhaps how this connects to their eventual postsecondary pathway.

## **Conclusion**

By studying the cognitive frames of immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers my study revealed how each of these groups understands the value and purpose of college, who belongs in college, and the reason for gaps in college completion for Latinas/os. The importance of college is deeply ingrained in both immigrant Latina/o parents and policymakers. The conversation regarding college quality is still nascent for many Latina/o parents. Some stick steadfastly to four-year colleges for their students, while others are uncertain if a two-year college or four-year college would work best for their children. For policymakers, more are certain about a four-year college for their children but some are also open to what the their own children/family or students in California want for themselves. Also, both Latina/o parents and policymakers held deeper frames for college when speaking of their children/families versus children in the neighborhood or in the state. For parents and policymakers at times it could be difficult to make decisions about college for those who weren't their children.

More parents than policymakers think that college should be for everyone rather than simply a choice for some. Perhaps this relates to that idea parents have that schools are preparing all children for college and that for the most part students need only to pay attention and have parental support to be successful. Meanwhile policymakers believe that schools are not preparing all students to attend and graduate from college and are concerned with systemic issues leveling the educational opportunities for students. This difference in choice and equity could be problematic as policymakers are supposed to represent the interest of parents in their communities. Lastly, since sources of information for college vary for Latina/o parents and

policymakers their ideas about college don't always align. Within these differences and similarities, one thing is clear. Both Latina/o parents and policymakers value college and the opportunities that it brings to their own children/family, communities, and the state. It is important to continue to examine the cognitive frames of educational stakeholders regarding college to inform the conversation of college for Latinas/os and other underrepresented students.



## **Appendix A: Interview Protocols**

### **Interview Protocol Latina/o Parents**

#### *Introductory Questions*

1. Can you please share your name, what area you live in, how many children you have, and what school they attend?

#### *College Defined and Who Belongs There*

2. Close your eyes and picture a college. What comes to mind? Who influences these ideas?

What do you know about the different kinds of colleges that your children can attend?

3. What are your own experiences with college? Give me some specific examples.

4. I'm going to show you the profiles of four different colleges (community college, Cal State, UC, and a local private college). For each college, I'd like to know what your initial thoughts are about it. Have you heard about this college? What else do you know about it? Do you know anyone who goes there? How did you find out about this information?

5. Who attends each of these colleges? Who should go to college in general? What does the ideal college student look like? How did you come up with this idea about who should go to college?

#### *Value and Purpose of College*

6. (Share two profiles of a brother and sister who are in college and have professional jobs and two who are not in college and working.) What do you think of the first pair of siblings? Do you think they are successful? Why? How about the second set? Do you think your children will take the same path as the first set of siblings or the second set of siblings? Why? Do you believe that college is important for your children? Why is it important or why is it not important? Who or what influenced your thinking about this?

7. What do you think the purpose of college is? Why do you think that? Who or what influenced your thinking about this? How has not going to college affected your life? After these responses read a short article on the importance of college in regards to the economy versus intellectual growth. Have parents respond to this.

#### *College Related Actions and Decisions*

8. Can you talk about college related actions or decisions that you have had to make for your children? What about in your own personal life? How do you think your thoughts on college have shaped these decisions? (If not given any, ask for specific examples for each).

#### *College Access Problem*

9. (Show a chart that shows how Latino student lag behind other racial and ethnic groups when it comes to college graduation.) Why do you think this is happening? What makes you think this way? Do you think going to college and graduating is different for Black students, White students, or Asian students in California?

10. What would you recommend to get more Latino students to attend and graduate from college?

### **Interview Protocol Policymakers**

#### *Introductory Questions*

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself. How long have you been at your current position? Where did you grow up? Do you have any children or family members in the K-12 education system or in college?

#### *College Defined and Who Belongs There*

2. Close your eyes and picture a college. What comes to mind? Who influences these ideas? What do you know about the different kinds of colleges that you can attend?

3. What are your own experiences with college? Give me some examples.
4. I'm going to show you the profiles of four different colleges (community college, Cal State, UC, and a local private college). For each college, I'd like to know what your initial thoughts are about it. Have you heard about this college? What else do you know about it? Do you know anyone who goes there? How did you find out about this information?
5. Who attends each of these colleges? Who should go to college in general? What does the ideal college student look like? How did you come up with this idea about who should go to college?

#### *Value and Purpose of College*

6. (Share two profiles of a brother and sister who are in college and have professional jobs and two who are not in college and working.) What do you think of the first pair of siblings? Do you think they are successful? Why? How about the second set? Do you think you will take the same path as the first set of siblings or the second set of siblings? Why? Do you believe that college is important for you? Why is it important or why is it not important? Who or what influenced your thinking about this?
7. What do you think the purpose of college is? Why do you think that? Who or what influenced your thinking about this? How has going to college or not going college affected you? After these responses read a short article on the importance of college in regards to the economy versus intellectual growth. Have policymakers respond to this.

#### *College Related Actions and Decisions*

8. Can you talk about college related actions or decisions that you have had to make for you or your children if you have any? How do you think your thoughts on college have shaped these decisions? (If not given any, ask for specific examples for each).

#### *College Access Problem*

9. (Show a chart that illustrates how Latina/o students lag behind other racial and ethnic groups when it comes to college graduation.) Why do you think this is happening? What makes you think this way? Do you think going to college and graduating is different for Latino students, Black students, White students, or Asian students in California?
10. What would you recommend to get more Latino students to attend and graduate from college?

## **Appendix B: Supplementary Materials**

### **Supplementary Materials for Interviews and Focus Groups**

#### **College Profiles**

##### **College #1:**

A medium-sized, 2-year, public community college. This college is located in a very large city and is primarily a commuter campus. A commuter campus is one where most students do not live on campus and commute to school. The college offers certificates and associate degrees. It has 20,381 total undergraduate students. Annual tuition and fees are \$1,418 for those students who are residents of the state where the college is located. More than one quarter of students who complete a two year associate's degree at this college transfer to a four year college to complete their bachelor's degree. It has open admissions which means that everyone who applies gets in.

##### **College #2**

A large, 4-year, public university. This college is located in a very large city and is primarily a commuter campus. A commuter campus is one where most students do not live on campus and commute to school. The college offers certificates, bachelor's degrees and master's degrees. It has 19,574 total undergraduate students. At this college, 37% of students complete their bachelor's degrees within six years. Annual tuition and fees are \$6,335 for those students who are residents of the state where the college is located. On average 71% of financial need is met to cover the cost of attending this college. Of all students who apply to this college, 63% are admitted.

##### **College #3:**

A large, 4-year, public university. This college is located in a small city and is primarily a residential campus. A residential campus is one where a majority of students live on campus or near the campus rather than commuting to school. The college offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. It has 25,951 total undergraduate students. At this college, 91% of students graduate with a bachelor's degree within six years. Annual tuition and fees are \$12,864 for those students who are residents of the state where the college is located. On average 79% of financial need is met to cover the cost of attending this college. Of all students who apply to this college, 18% are admitted.

##### **College #4:**

A small, 4-year, private liberal arts college. This college is located in a small city and is primarily a residential campus. A residential campus is one where a majority of students live on campus or near the campus rather than commuting to school. The college offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. It has 1,695 total undergraduate students. At this college, 66% of students graduate with a bachelor's degree within six years. Annual tuition and fees are \$41,636 for those students who are residents of the state where the college is located. On average 79% of financial need is met to cover the cost of attending this college. Of all students who apply to this college, 63% are admitted.

\*Sources: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search> and <http://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/Default.aspx>

### **Image of Latino College Student**

[http://www.collegebound.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/shutterstock\\_61302364.jpg](http://www.collegebound.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/shutterstock_61302364.jpg)

### **Sibling Profiles**

Santiago and Sofia are brother and sister. Santiago is 25 years old and Sofia is 24 years old. They both attended a four-year college and received bachelor's degrees two years ago. Santiago studied sociology and now is doing college counseling at a non-profit organization. Sofia studied engineering and has a job at an engineering firm.

Mateo and Valentina are brother and sister. Mateo is 25 years old and Sofia is 24 years old. Neither attended college after high school although they have some occupational training. Mateo works as a washer repairman. Isabella is a medical assistant at a doctor's office.

### **Article on Economy and Intellectual Growth**

Excerpt from article: *"The Danger of Telling Poor Kids That College Is the Key to Social Mobility"*

<http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/01/the-danger-of-telling-poor-kids-that-college-is-the-key-to-social-mobility/283120/>

### **College Graduation and Enrollment Charts**

Used Campaign for College Opportunity Info graphics from the State of Latinos Higher Education in California November 2013 Report.

<http://collegecampaign.org/portfolio/november-2013-the-state-of-latinos-in-higher-education-in-california/>

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