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LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
School of Behavioral Health
in conjunction with the
Department of Counseling and Family Sciences

Familias Latinas Unidas: Intervention to Increase Hispanic Enrollment in
Higher Education

by

Yency E. Garcia

A Project submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy

June 2021

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Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this doctoral project in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a doctoral project for the degree Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy.

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ABBREVIATIONS

FLU	Familias Latina Unidas
FGH	First Generation Hispanic
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
ELL	English Language Learners

ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL PROJECT

Familias Latinas Unidas: Intervention to Increase Hispanic Enrollment in
Higher Education

by

Yency E. Garcia

Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy, Graduate Program in
Counseling and Family Sciences
Loma Linda University, June 2021
Dr. Winetta Oloo, Chairperson

Familias Latinas Unidas (FLU) is a 12-week psychotherapy program designed for Hispanic high school students and their parents. It especially targets students between the ages of 15 and 18 who would be the first in their family to attend college. FLU addresses cultural stressors that are known to interfere with the pursuit of higher education in this population. FLU has been endorsed by community leaders in Education and will be implemented across Southern California

CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Literature Review

The purpose of Familias Latinas Unidas (FLU) is to increase higher educational attainment amongst first generation Hispanics. By incorporating parents into this journey, the likelihood of success will increase (Jeynes, 2017). Not only will attention be paid to the educational component but a cultural focus will also be taken. By addressing the cultural stress experienced by Latino students, this proposed program will also be addressing an important part of the Latino student experience. Through the formation of a bicultural identity and the braiding of cultures, Latino students will be able to experience the healthiest form of acculturation. A program such as Familias Latinas Unidas is needed because the Latino population in the United States is a rapidly growing population experiencing cultural stress and low rates of higher educational achievement. Family Latinas Unidas will be delivered using the modality of psychoeducational group therapy followed by focused-family sessions for each participatory family. The groups will cover six areas of focus that will include Hispanic identity focusing on language and culture, mental health, building of support networks, immigration resources, community linkage, and the promotion of higher education. There will be a group facilitated for parents and a group for teenagers. The focus topics of Familia Latinas Unidas will be tailored according to the group audience. The psychoeducational component of the program entails the education and information provided to the students and families regarding immigration, community linkages and the higher education focus topics. The

therapeutic component will be addressed through the process of group therapy where each individual will get an opportunity to reflect and process the experiences associated with each focus topic.

The author of FLU is a first-generation student herself. The concept for this program was birthed through the author's personal experience of seeking and achieving higher education. In the formulation of the literature review below, as well as in the development of FLU as an intervention, this author was many times moved on an emotional level. Given the closeness of the work, this author periodically used alternate readers to identify personal biases and any implicit bias that could manifest in the work or in the application of the literature and theory. Feedback from these alternate readers, who are from varied ethnic, racial, and educational backgrounds, was incorporated to ensure the creation of a program that goes beyond the self of the author and meets the needs of this population.

Educational Hurdles

In a study completed with 141 Mexican American college students, 80% of them agreed that education was vital to youth success (Killoren, Streit, Alfaro, Delgado, & Johnson, 2017). Historically, the personal characteristics of a student are strongly associated to their academic achievement (Gamoran, 1987). Identifying the characteristics that produce high academic achievement is therefore beneficial to provoke higher academic achievement in Hispanic students. When predicting educational goals and performance for Mexican American students, college self-efficacy and the perception of future barriers have been found to be statistically significant predictors (Garriott, &

Flores, 2013). Those who perform as high achievers will likely maintain this performance by staying in school (not dropping out), attending schools that perform higher, enrolling in advanced courses such as math and science and enrolling in a college bound track (Gamoran, 1987). This informs those working with high school students that preventing drop outs, encouraging students to enroll in advanced classes, and having college bound guidance will contribute to the likelihood of academic success. Students with high SES as a result will have more advantageous schooling experiences leading to higher academic achievement. However, when these opportunities are equally accessible, the level of SES does not have a significant effect on student achievement (Gamoran, 1987). Advocating for equal opportunities for students regardless of SES will advocate for their academic success.

There is a need for schools to offer the same academic opportunities for Hispanic students given that schools that have higher numbers of Hispanic and other minority students are offering less challenging academic courses (Kohler, & Lazarín, 2007). Hispanic children frequently attend schools with high populations of low-income families that unfortunately offer less resources to their students. States with high Hispanic communities receive significantly less funding given that funding gaps exist between low and high minority districts. Therefore, we find school districts who have the highest amounts of minority students receiving considerably less funding than districts with fewer minority students (Kohler, & Lazarín, 2007). In a study completed by Owens, (2018), Owens set out to prove that income attainment gaps are greater in metropolitan areas with higher income segregation between school districts and that income segregation could be a possible explanation for disparities found in education. Owens

limited her study to non-Hispanic Whites and Black students. For this study Owens made use of The Panel Study on Income Dynamics Child Development Supplement II longitudinal study of 2002-2003 with a sample of 1200 children. Owens found that the association between the income of the family and the educational achievement of the student had an increase when income segregation rose between districts. This demonstrated that the income achievement gap is greater in metropolitan areas that also had greater levels of income segregation, where high income families live in the same neighborhoods and low-income families live in separate neighborhoods with more low-income families (Owens, 2018). Although the study does not focus on first generation Hispanic students, the findings may still shed some light on this population as study participants were students within the same age group, some of whom also belong to a minority within the United States.

Barriers to educational opportunities were studied by Vega, Moore & Miranda, (2015) as perceived by a purposeful sampling of 18 African American and Latino high school students who attended high schools with 80% of its population identifying as financially disadvantaged. The researchers made use of the invitational education framework created by Purkey and Novak in 1996 and sought to answer the research question: “What factors do African American and Latino High school students feel hinder their education experiences?” The barriers identified included: the attitude of educators towards the perceived academic ability of the students, school counselors and the role they played in getting students ready for college or failure of, support of family and peers or lack thereof, unfair school policies, and unsafe neighborhoods (Vega, Moore III, & Miranda, 2015).

In a study completed by Manzano-Sanchez, Matarrita-Cascante, & Outley, (2019), researches also sought to identify barriers and supports that Latinx students perceived in their pursuit of a college education. Using a Social Cognitive Career theoretical framework, researchers interviewed 23 Latinx high school students ages 15-17. Manzano-Sanchez, Matarrita-Cascante, & Outley worked with students from a high school in Southern California that consisted of 90.3% financially disadvantaged students. The findings of the study resulted in lack of financial resources, family responsibility, job interference, lack of preparedness from their high schools, low grades, low academic confidence, and lack of support from school personnel as barriers experienced by the participants in their pursuit of higher education. The males in the study, additionally identified lack of opportunities as a barrier to a college education. In identifying support, the study found that the support from parents and siblings was most valued by the participants. Additionally, support from friends, peers, relatives and others who they identify with and have obtained college degrees, was identified as sources of support (Manzano-Sanchez, Matarrita-Cascante, & Outley, 2019).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that in the years between 2016 and 2017, the Hispanic high school dropout rate decreased from 9.1 to 8.2 percent. Even with this decrease the Hispanic dropout rates continued to be higher than those of Blacks (6.5%), those of 2 or more races (4.5%), White (4.3%), Pacific Islander (3.9%), and Asian (2.1%). In the academic year 2016-1017 the Hispanic high school completion rate came in third amongst diverse ethnic groups polled. Asian Pacific Islanders had the highest completion rates at 91%, followed by Whites with 89%, Hispanics came in with 80%, Blacks with 78%, and American Indian/Alaska Native with

72%. College enrollment saw an increase in Hispanic students from 22 percent in 2000 to 36 percent in 2017. Further, the number of bachelor's degrees earned by Hispanic students more than tripled between 2000-2001 and 2015-2016 school years (NCES, 2019). This most recent data demonstrates progress that has been made with Hispanic students completing high school and a decrease in dropout rates. Hispanic students have also made significant improvements in the completion of Bachelor's degrees. It is troubling that although Hispanic students have made significant progress, they continue to trail behind the other ethnic groups identified. This demonstrates that there continues to be room for growth in supporting Hispanic students achieve higher education. This data demonstrates the capacity and potential for success that Hispanic students possess, Familia Latinas Unidas is a program that will foster this capacity and potential by mitigating the identified barriers that this review has identified thus far.

In order to reduce the dropout rates and increase higher education completion as previously described, schools must increase the academic resiliency of their students in order to produce academic success. (Gonzalez, & Padilla, 1997). In their research, over 20 year ago, Gonzalez and Padilla found that academic resilience is fostered by creating a supporting academic environment for Hispanic students as well as creating a sense of belonging. Academic motivation, whether the student finds it intrinsically, or extrinsically, was found to be a robust prediction of a term identified as *school intentions*. School intentions is the intention that students have in pursuing further education post-high school graduation. The research of Vera, Polanin, Polanin, & Carr, (2018), like Gonzales and Padilla (1997), also found that a sense of school belonging in addition to family support, were the most meaningful predictors of academic motivation. A sense of

belonging, thus is a vital component proven true by different researchers over the span of 20 years. A sense of belonging will be fostered through Familia Latinas Unidas through the open discourse of each student's unique bicultural identity and through the coming together of students with similar demographics. Furthermore, Ethnic Racial Identity (ERI) and family centered values, are connected to positive educational outcomes in Hispanic students (Constante, Marchand, Cross, & Rivas-Drake, 2018). These family values help to mediate the relationship students have with school engagement and their ERI. Therefore, familism has a positive effect on the level of school engagement in students. The support of parents as has been previously outlined, is significantly associated with the engagement students have with their schools (Constante, Marchand, Cross, & Rivas-Drake, 2018). For these reasons, evidenced through research, Familias Latinas Unidas incorporates the parents in the program modality in order to promote academic success in the target population.

Further, when students develop sociopolitical views, there is greater satisfaction in the need for academic competence as issues of inequity and discrimination present in their sociopolitical hemispheres are recognized and externalized within their understanding. It is possible that teachers who express concern and develop connections with students concurrently cultivate sociopolitical development in Latino students (Luginbuhl, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2016).

Parent's Educational Involvement

Historically, money, safety, and lack of childcare have been obstacles to parent's involvement in their children's education (Henderson, Marburger, & Gams, 1986; Turney

and Kao, 2009). For example, when it comes to a parent participating in school or classroom work, this usually means that a parent would need to take time off work to participate. For a family with limited income, this could be very difficult to accommodate. In regards to safety, evening or nighttime school activities could present as a safety risk if parents needed to walk through high crime neighborhoods to attend said activities (Henderson, Marburger, & Gams, 1986). Further, lack of childcare can also be a barrier for families with limited support (Henderson, Marburger, & Gams, 1986; Turney and Kao, 2009).

Historical as well as more recent research has identified language as a barrier to parent's involvement (Nicolau, & Ramos, 1990; Turney and Kao, 2009). Parents who are monolingual Spanish-speaking will have limited abilities to communicate with monolingual English-speaking teachers and school personnel. Teachers can misinterpret parents' lack of involvement as a lack of care when in fact language is the true barrier. However, this sentiment can also be experienced by the parents. When teachers do not communicate with parents due to the language barrier, parents can interpret this as a lack of care on the part of the teachers (Nicolau, & Ramos, 1990). Further, informational material that is sent home to parents may also represent a language barrier. If the information sent home is in English or poorly translated Spanish, parents will not have a clear understanding of important information being provided, thus limiting their ability to participate or be involved. Information such as modified school schedules or expected attire could be lost in translation or simply not be received by the parents if the information is provided in English (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Navigating this issue is of utmost importance in increasing parent participation.

Cultural beliefs also play a role in the degree of parent participation. Historical research found that many Hispanic parents believed their role is to teach respect and appropriate behaviors to their children and the role of the teacher was to instill knowledge in children. Additionally, there is a cultural understanding that respect is given to those with higher levels of education. Due to this reason, parents withheld from challenging or questioning teachers given that teachers had a higher level of education and that academic education was the role of the teacher and not the parent. (Nicolau, & Ramos, 1990). Unfortunately, this cultural belief interfered with parent's involvement in their children's education. Eighteen years later, research again supported this cultural belief of separate roles between parents and teachers. Parents understand their role to be of teaching their children a hard work ethic while holding teachers as educational authority figures deemed of respect (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Questioning teachers or school personnel could be understood as disrespectful by Hispanic parents while also limiting their involvement. In addition, if parents do not know the right questions to ask school counselors or teachers, they are less likely to interject (Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas, 2005).

Immigrant Hispanic parents can also encounter lack of transportation as a barrier to their involvement. Parents with limited income may find the use of public transportation or long-distance walks to school to be challenging. Further, parents could get a sense that they are not welcome at their child's school or find meetings to be at inconvenient times. Due to these barriers, immigrant parents report lower levels of in school involvement than non-Hispanic White counterparts (Turney and Kao, 2009). However, it remains important for Hispanic parents to be involved in their children's

education.

In 2005 Domina used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth of 1979 (NLSY79) to study parental involvement and the effect it has on the achievement test scores of elementary school children as well as on the Behavioral Problems Index (Domina, 2005). Domina used a sample of 1,445 students, fourth grade or younger, who participated in the NLSY79 and completed the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT) and the Behavioral Problems Index (BPI) in 1996 and 2000. Further, Domina made use of six variables found in the NLSY79 to measure school-based and in-home parental involvement. The findings of the study demonstrated that not all parental involvement activities have a positive relationship to academic achievement. In fact, some activities (ie attending PTA meetings, parent-teacher conference, volunteering, homework help) were found to be negatively related or with no significance after Domina controlled for school, family, and previous academic achievement, however they did seem to improve students' behavioral outcomes. As related to this program, it was found that the involvement of low SES parents had more influence on the academic outcome of their children than parents with high SES. Given that first generation Hispanic students is the focus of this program, this specific finding is important in supporting the notion that the involvement of parents is needed in order to increase the academic success of their students.

In the past there has been an association made between low income, low education, and less involvement in a child's education (Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, & Nero, 2010). However, the manner in which academic involvement is defined affects how Latinos' academic involvement is perceived. A common misconception has

been that due to parent's low perceived academic involvement, there was low interest in academic success. Although parents may have low in-school involvement, they do have high in-home school involvement (Ryan, et al 2010). Given that Latino parents hold academic success as important, FLU will use this information in the support groups and creatively work with parents to increase their in-school involvement. Park & Holloway (2018) also looked at family income and how it relates to parent's involvement in their children's education.

Park and Holloway (2018) made use of the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the 2007 National Household Education Surveys Program by looking at 3,248 participant responses. Park and Holloway specifically look at respondents who fell below the poverty line. Park and Holloway found that parents who were economically disadvantaged were less likely to feel responsibility in the education of their children, less likely to feel welcomed at their children's school, or feel that the school was informative or satisfactory. Parents were also involved in school based/academic activities and socialization to a lesser degree than parents who were not economically disadvantaged (Park, & Holloway, 2018).

In a research study completed by Jasis, & Ordoñez-Jasis, (2012), on three different parent-initiated school involvement programs made up of low SES or immigrant Hispanic parents, the authors found that in forming and participating in these parent-initiated school involvement programs, parents found a sense of belonging, they found purpose and a need for community action. Further, the parents challenged a sense of cultural isolation through their involvement, and found new mediums for participation and citizenship. Parents also experienced higher levels of efficacy, both individually and

collectively in their interactions with school personnel. In exploring reasons for the high involvement, one mother reported doing this because she was willing to do for her children what she would never dare to do for herself. When schools support formal or informal participation of parents through self-organizing efforts, this can lead to a reformation in school, family, and community engagement (Jasis, & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2012). This research supports the notion that when parents are supported in their efforts to become involved in their children's education, significant changes can be attained that will directly affect the success of the student.

In a study done in 2005 by Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas it was found that there were six main barriers affecting education for Latino students in the state of Georgia. The six main problems found were: “a) lack of immigrant understanding of the Georgia school system, (b) low parental involvement in the schools, (c) lack of residential stability among the Latino population, (d) little school support for the needs of Latino students, (e) few incentives for Latino adolescents to continue their education, and (f) barred immigrant access to higher education” (pg41). The researchers in this study found that these barriers affected the probability of a teen finishing high school and continuing on to get a college education.

In this study, parents shared that although they had interest in their children's education, because of feelings such as embarrassment and shame in not speaking English, communication was difficult with teachers and administrators. In return when teachers would not get a response from parents, they would conclude that the parents were not interested in their children's education. Similarly, Latino students who did not speak English and who were of brown skin, shared many times feeling ignored by their

teachers. The researchers named this, “the feeling of being a nonperson” and stated these dynamics caused students in this study to be further separated from the educational experience. Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas went on to suggest that there is a need for more “bilingual and bicultural educators” as this would “(a) bridge the gap between families and school administration and (b) provide positive role models for Latino youth”.

A meta-analysis of 28 studies entitled *The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Latino Student Outcomes* sought to answer four questions related to parents’ involvement in their children’s education (Jeynes, 2017). It first addressed whether Latino students achieved stronger academic and behavioral outcomes based on parental involvement. Second, it addressed if parental involvement based on the child’s grade (elementary or secondary school) produced different effects. Third, it examined whether programs in the school aimed at encouraging parent participation were helpful for students and last it sought to identify the qualities of parents and their involvement that were most helpful for students. As a result, parents’ involvement was found to be related to positive outcomes, specifically on academic outcomes. No statistical significance was found in regards to the behavioral outcomes of the student. This therefore supports the notion of including parents in FLU and of encouraging parents to become more involved in their child’s education. Further, positive academic outcomes for Latino students were found to be present in both elementary and secondary education when parents were involved; differences were not found based on grade. In other words, parents will have the opportunity to increase their involvement in their child’s education at any point resulting in positive academic outcomes. This finding helps to alleviate

concerns or guilt that parents may have of not being involved in past years. No statistical significance was found in regards to positive effects of school-based parental involvement programs (Jeynes, 2017). Last, the parent's style and strong parent-child communication were found to be factors that were most helpful for students (Jeynes, 2017).

FLU will serve as a platform that will encourage participation of parents in the academic achievement of their students. This platform will be used to connect parents with their particular schools and enhance their understanding of ways to become involved. This higher involvement will support the likelihood of student academic success, which is the mission of FLU. For these reasons, parents will be included in the formatting of FLU. Parents play such a vital role in the formation of their children, by including them, we increase the likelihood of their children's academic success.

Language Barriers

To maximize academic success, bilingual students must develop biliteracy (Babino, & Stewart, (2017). Students may develop conflicted values of bilingualism due to living in a society that favors English and regularly witnessing authority figures primarily speak the English language which can affect their academic achievement. If educators protect and promote the Spanish language, the message transmitted is that there is value found in all languages, allowing for academic success to be maximized amongst bilingual students (Babino, & Stewart, 2017).

Lindholm-Leary, & Block, 2010 found that participation in dual language programs helps low SES Hispanic students perform similarly or significantly higher than

mainstream students in the areas of English reading/language arts and math. Further, English learning denotated students are able to increase their test scores when in dual immersion programs faster than mainstream students between second and fifth grade in the areas of language arts and mathematics. English learner students also made the most progress on improving test scores (Lindholm-Leary, & Block, 2010).

The theory of holistic bilingualism theorizes that multiple languages serve as cognitive and academic support for bilingual or multilingual speakers (Butvilofsky, Hopewell, Escamilla, & Sparrow, 2017). Schools have focused on students learning English and have provided limited bilingual education. However, there is insufficient research that demonstrates that this has actually increased English learning over a bilingualism/biliteracy model. Through programs such as Literacy Squared, English literacy development in the subjects of reading and writing can be accelerated. Literacy Squared is a bilingual/biliterate program that lends a focus on paired literacy without losing the Spanish language or literary achievement. As evidence of the effectiveness of a bilingualism/biliteracy model, the students who participated in a three-year study of Literacy square, demonstrated more than a year's growth in English and Spanish each year they participate in the program (Butvilofsky, Hopewell, Escamilla, & Sparrow, 2017).

Initially it was hypothesized that students classified as English Language Learners (ELL) may have limited access to post-secondary education due to language limitations (Kanno, & Cromley, 2013). However, lack of family capital commonly found with ELLs was found to be the actual reason students did not proceed with post-secondary education. The lack of family capital includes parents who did not attend college or

parents who have low educational expectations for the students. Furthermore, the bilingual abilities of students who were classified as English Proficient, was found to be an advantage in accessing post-secondary education. Most importantly though, the academic capital students gained during their time in high school influenced a student's access to post-secondary education the most (Kanno, & Cromley, 2013). A high academic capital however will be challenging for students who are ELLs.

Legal Barriers

Students who are undocumented will face additional barriers that will have to be addressed in order for them to enter higher education. Legal barriers faced include policies in place that determine if students will have to pay in state or out of state tuition given their legal status, access to financial aid, and enrolment in universities depending on the state they are in (Suarez-Orozco, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2015). Furthermore, undocumented students are legally excluded from societal rites of passage per say, such as obtaining a driver's license and obtaining legal employment. Students must face the daunting question of what will happen when Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the deferred action from removal program ends and emotional turbulence due to threats of deportation to undocumented family members (Suarez-Orozco, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2015). Currently, raids and the threat of deportation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are real threats that undocumented students, individuals, families, school districts, and entire communities face (Shine & Galisky, 2009). If undocumented students are not protected or eligible under the protection of DACA they must confront the reality of the limitations they will experience even with a college

degree.

California provides the option for undocumented students to enter higher education as opposed to other states like Georgia that have legislation that prohibit the admission of undocumented students into their top schools. As described by Redden (2009), “approximately 54% of 4-year institutions and 70% of community colleges (knowingly) admit undocumented students to their institutions, but do not provide financial aid”. As of 2015, 20 states have enacted laws that changed the residency requirements, allowing for students to pay in state resident tuition whom would have otherwise paid out of state college tuition (Nienhuser, 2015). As of 2014, only five states have created and implemented policies that grant college students financial aid (Nienhuser, 2015). After 2018, three states were added amongst those that provide financial aid/resources to their undocumented students (Ngo, & Astudillo, 2019). In other states such as Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, undocumented students have been barred from enrolling in most or all public postsecondary education institutions (IHELG, 2014). Abrego (2006) found that for some students, the stark prospect of barriers that could be encountered in the future led to a decline in educational motivation for those who would have pursued higher education.

Therefore, the dissemination of information in regards to options that undocumented students have need to be more widespread to increase motivation for students to pursue higher education. Without the widespread dissemination of information, it is likely that students will continue to experience decreases in motivation to pursue higher education due to lack of knowledge in regards to their options. Information that must be disseminated includes the availability of scholarships offered

through foundations. Also, the information about different scholarships offered to undocumented students should be provided. This information is of vital importance as it can offer hope for students who would like to pursue higher education but are undocumented and/or do not have the financial means to pay for their education. In FLU, options in financial aid will be presented to students in order to increase their awareness to the resources available.

Similarly, in another study conducted by McWhirer, Ramos and Medina (2013) it was found that the expectation to face problems due to legal status, affected student's aspirations for "upward educational mobility". Because of this reality, it is necessary not only for the awareness of options to be disseminated amongst this population, but we also find a need for the community to support legislation that will provide the support needed for these students. Therefore, through FLU, legal resources will be identified to parents and students in order to address these barriers.

Mental Health Barriers

With the legal barriers that students must face come also the emotional struggles produced by these legal barriers by undocumented students. Students who have experienced the emotional toll of these barriers express their status as undocumented produced "anxiety, worry, and uncertainty for themselves and their family members" (pg. 230). In addition, these worries included "lack of financial resources, deportation, fear of not being accepted, acculturation difficulties (e.g., language and physical differences), discrimination, affordability of school expenses, trusting, and what the future may hold, among others" (pg 230) (Cervantes, Minero, & Brito, 2015). Bohon, Macpherson, and

Atilas (2005) found that students who enter the educational system at a later age such as middle school or high school, have a harder time transitioning into and adapting to a new school system. They continued in stating that if students feel that they will not catch up, even with special programs that would help them get up to grade level, they were more likely to not finish high school. Those who do not dropout face the possibility of not being able to pass the English written exam needed to graduate, even if they are at grade level (Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas, 2005).

In a study completed by Myers, Wyatt, Ullman, Loeb, Chin, Prause, & Liu, (2015) the authors sought to analyze the collective experiences over a lifetime of trauma and adversities and how this may predict the degree in severity of symptoms of depression, anxiety and PTSD. The study included 500 participants identified as African America and Latino of low socioeconomic status. The focus at hand was assessed through the use of standard battery of stress and mental health stressors self-reported. The study identified resiliency in both ethnic groups even when adversities and trauma are taken into account. Further, levels of PTSD and anxiety symptoms were found with depressive symptoms scoring higher. The results supported the conclusion that experiences of discrimination and histories and trauma significantly predict “psychological distress and dysfunction” (Myers, Wyatt, Ullman, Loeb, Chin, Prause, & Liu, 2015).

Discrimination and its role in negative mental health symptoms was later supported with data from the 2013-2014 Niños Lifestyle and Diabetes of 629 adults originally from originally from Mexico was used to study the interplay of perceived discrimination and depressive symptoms (Ward, Feinstein, Vines, Robinson, Haan, &

Aiello, 2019). The study found that participants who experienced higher levels of discrimination also had higher depressive symptoms as opposed to those who rarely or never experienced discrimination. Further, it was found that the educational level of participants played a role in the strength of this association. For example, participants with over 12 years of education had a stronger association between discrimination and depressive symptoms compared to participants with 12 year of education or less (Ward et al, 2019). Therefore, discrimination and the effects it may have on depressive symptoms is an emotional barrier that students will have to navigate in their pursuit of higher education.

Further, in a study completed by Jardin, Mayorga, Bakhshaie, Garey, Viana, Sharp, & Zvolensky, (2018) the researchers completed a cross sectional study with 788 Hispanic college students 18-25 years of age from a southwestern public university in order to study the connection between acculturative stress and depression/anxiety within the Hispanic population through the use of an assessment battery that was self-reported online by participants. Participants were part of a larger study assessing the mental and physical health of college students between April 2014 and April 2016. The assessments used for this study included the Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Scale in assessing acculturation stress, the Anxiety Sensitivity Index-3 to address anxiety sensitivity, the Inventory of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms that gathered anxious and depressive symptoms within the two previous weeks of completing, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule that assess how participants respond to 20 positive and negative affective states and lastly, the Financial Strain Questionnaire in assessing financial stress. The researchers found that acculturation stress had an indirect effect on

the formation of anxiety sensitivity on symptoms of depression, suicide, anxiety, and social anxiety on the research participants. Further, the researchers found that the indirect effect of acculturation stress was akin to the outcomes of anxiety/depression via lower ranked factors of anxiety sensitivity. Last, the model used to predict symptoms of suicidality coming from anxiety sensitivity via acculturation stress was significant but produced a small effect size of .01.

Strengths

In 2009, the Pew Research Center found that 89% of Hispanics ages 16 to 25 agreed that obtaining a college degree was of importance for making progress in life. This view at the time was higher than the view of other young people also between the ages of 16 to 25. (Pew Social & Demographic Trends, 2009). This goes to show that there continues to be a disparity between young Hispanics knowing the advantages of a college education versus entering higher education as only 36% of Hispanics enrolled in college as of 2017 (NCES, 2019). In this same group of young adults, ages 16 to 25, 77% also believe their parents would agree that a college education is the best thing to do after high school. It is valuable that most Latino parents agree on the importance of a college education. However, as mentioned above one of the barriers to Hispanic students moving from high school into college is a lack of information. If both parents and students were better informed of the options in regards to higher education, it is possible that more students would enter higher education. For those students who have overcome the educational and legal barriers, they have attributed their success “to cultural survival practices embedded within strong and consistent family support, a belief that one needs to

succeed for the betterment of the family, and a passionate desire to contribute to one's community" (Falicov, 2014 pg 226.). This principle can be traced back to the idea of *comunitarismo* and *familismo*, where a high degree of importance is placed on family and community.

Another study that supports the idea of *comunitarismo and familismo* as a protective factor for Hispanic students is the study conducted by Perez., et al (2009) who found that when faced with risk factors that include "elevated feelings of societal rejection, low parental education, and high employment hours during school", undocumented students also experience high environmental and personal protective factors such as "supportive parents, friends, participation in school activities, valuing school, [and] bilingual competency". Students who have pursued higher education in the face of legal and educational odds reflect on their choices and express that the challenges they faced were a representation of the struggles their communities face. Further, these students felt it was their responsibility to advocate for the advancement of their communities and wanting to continue advocating for their communities even after earning their degrees (Perez., et al, 2009).

A qualitative study by Vega in 2016 made use of purposeful sampling to study the experiences of 10 high achieving first generation Hispanic students. Vega set out to understand the factors that influence first generation Latino students in enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education. Vega found that academic rigor, support networks such as school personnel, family, and friends, internal motivation and a sense of responsibility given their first-generation nature were the common influences of these first-generation students in their enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education

(Vega, 2016). These results give us a glimpse into the factors that could account for the increased rates of Latinos enrolling in college and obtaining baccalaureate degrees.

Borjian in 2018 published a qualitative study using purposeful sampling with eight students that focused on the academic success of undocumented college students who are also active advocates for the academic opportunities of other undocumented students (Borjian, 2018). Borjian set out to address the following questions: “What significant factors inspire respondents to stay and succeed in college? What influences the respondents to be civically engaged? How have the outcomes of the 2016 Presidential election affected respondents’ desire to continue their college education and to advocate for others?” (p 26.) Borjian found that economic security is a high motivator for educational success amongst the respondents. Further, students felt a “sense of obligation and gratitude to their families for the sacrifices they have faced in raising them” (p 28). Students also identified the need for laws that are pro-immigration as they foster educational resilience and success in undocumented students. For example, students reflected on the impact the executive action of DACA produced in their hope for economic stability and motivated them to pursue higher education. Although respondents identified feelings of sadness over the results of the 2016 Presidential Election, this did not deter their motivation and pursuit of higher education. Seven out of the eight respondents reported continuing their aspirations for educational success even though they experienced bullying, racism and discrimination during their educational tracks. They also identified strong feelings of obligation and responsibility in advocating and giving back to other undocumented students as they begin their higher educational pursuits.

The push towards higher education amongst Latinos is a long withstanding movement. In *Community as Resistance: Reconceptualizing Historical Instances of Community within Latin@ Education*, author Rothrock sets out in proposing a definition of “community” and how it represents resistance in “Latin@” education (Rothrock, 2017). Rothrock uses historical analysis with Critical Human Geography as the theoretical framework guiding this conceptualization. Rothrock argues that “community” could be interpreted as the space in which “Latin@s” have worked against the oppression found in education and towards “educational equity”. Taking a historical view of this work against oppression and towards equity, Rothrock identifies an advocacy community organization created in 1929 called the Mutualistas. Rothrock cites the Mutualistas as an organization that united Mexican citizens and migrants in support of the education of their children. Educational and socioeconomic equity is also the motivator for the Familias Latinas Unidas program.

The motivation behind this review is to shed light on the barriers Latino students face in the process of acquiring education. Familias Latinas Unidas attempts to meet the needs of these students by addressing these barriers. The program is intended to encourage Latino youth and their parents by exposing them to the options they have in obtaining higher education. It is the hope that such encouragement and education will result in increased rates of Latino students completing high school, entering college and even higher numbers completing bachelor’s degrees.

It is of vital importance that low-income Latino students be rendered the attention needed as the Latino population as a whole is a growing population in our society. Not only are educational resources a need for Latino students, they are vital in helping Latino

young adults establish a brighter future. Familias Latinas Unidas has the goal of providing first generation Hispanics information regarding higher education so that parents will be better prepared to help their children pursue higher education, while also using a psychoeducational group therapy modality to address the cultural and emotional challenges experienced by first generation Hispanics in the United States.

In researching the work that has already been done to increase the rates of higher education achievement amongst first generation Hispanics, this writer identified over 50 programs throughout California and other states that make similar efforts in this pursuit. Through agencies such as Excelencia in Education, over 45 programs are identified tailored to Hispanic students in California promoting the pursuit and attainment of higher education. The focus of these programs vary according to the age of the student, area of concentration such as academics, financial aid, peer groups, mentorship and more. Other agencies such as the Latin American Association who service large cities in Georgia, United States provide a Latino youth leadership conference, a Latino youth leadership academy, Latino youth leadership alliance, a resource fair, mentoring to middle and high school students and parenting workshops, all with the focus of increasing Hispanic students' enrollment in higher education. Further, other programs such as The Promesa found in Boyle Heights makes use of a collaborative approach between residents, youth, schools, and community organizations in order to ultimately increase college and career readiness for the students of Boyle Heights.

Other programs such as the First Gen Forward through Latino U College Access focus on providing first generation Hispanic students one on one support from college enrollment through graduation. The focus here most closely resembles the focus of

Familias Latinas Unidas in that it hones in on the academic and socio-emotional needs of students as they navigate the challenges of being first generation college bound students. The distinction exists in that Familia Latinas Unidas would also work with the parents of the students in raising awareness of the cultural emotional stress students navigate.

All of the aforementioned programs are similar to Familias Latinas Unidas in that the ultimate goal is increasing the attainment of higher education amongst Hispanic students. The way in which Familias Latinas Unidas differs is that it will focus on first generation students by addressing the cultural-emotional stress associated with being bicultural and bilingual by working with both the parents and the students. By incorporating the family system, Familias Latinas Unidas will enhance its reach of awareness, education, and support to the individual first-generation student. In this regard, Familias Latinas Unidas is worth undertaking in order to mitigate the limitations found amongst the previous programs identified, most of which focus primarily on the student, do not focus specifically on first generation college students, and do not address the cultural-emotional stress that first generation students navigate.

CHAPTER TWO

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Familias Latinas Unidas will target cultural stress experienced by first generation Hispanics that interferes with their pursuit of higher education. In this case higher education is defined as enrollment in community college or university. For the purpose of this program, cultural stress is defined as the mental health impact first generation students experience in navigating dual cultures and the barriers, they overcome in obtaining higher education due to their ethnic background. By mitigating this stressor, the goal is to increase the achievement of higher education amongst first generation Hispanics. Familias Latina Unidas will make use of psychoeducational processing groups as the model for service delivery. There will be a psychoeducational processing group for the parents and a separate one for the teens. In the processing group for parents the following topics will be addressed: the development of a bicultural identity with a primary focus on language and culture and its impact on mental health, creating support networks, immigration resources, community linkages, and a heavy focus on the promotion of higher education. The psychoeducational processing group for the teens will address the development of their unique bicultural identities, creating support networks, community linkages, and a similarly heavy focus on higher education.

There is a need for this type of program because Latino youth experience unique challenges in their consideration and pursuit of higher education. These challenges may present as barriers for success, but they do not need to be. With adequate psychoeducation and resources, as will be given through Familias Latinas Unidas, Latino youth will be better equipped to tackle educational, cultural, linguistic, and emotional

barriers, mitigating these barriers for the pursuit and onset of a college education. Familias Latinas Unidas aims to increase the college enrollment of first-generation Hispanic students. Recognizing that the college enrollment of Hispanics is on the rise, Familias Latinas Unidas seeks to join this movement by supporting specifically first-generation Hispanic students and their parents. First, this program is necessary as the Hispanic population is amongst the lowest ethnic group who seek out mental health services (Méndez, & Cole, 2014). Due to this, the likelihood of the psychological challenges being addressed decreases. Psychoeducational process groups such as the ones that will be offered through Familias Latinas Unidas, will provide Hispanic families and their children a safe space to speak about each challenge, build a community, and use their collective experiences in building solidarity. Further, given that Hispanics are amongst the lowest seeking mental health services, the process groups will address this challenge/barrier in the hopes of decreasing interference with the pursuit of higher education. Families will benefit from the program addressing cultural stress, a component not identified in the preliminary search of existing programs. Cultural stress, as was explored, is triggered by unique aspects of culture, many times different than mainstream/dominant culture, that may be presented as negative, but with appropriate care and nurturance can be transformed into strengths. Familias Latinas Unidas intends in essence to call out cultural stress, create safe space to evaluate it, and nurture these parts of the individual by generating strengths that can be carried forward. Familias Latinas Unidas seeks to support the mental health of first-generation Hispanic students and their parents by targeting the results of cultural stress such as depression, anxiety, low self-worth and self-esteem as explored in the literature. Additionally, families will benefit

from exposure to mental health support, likely for the first time given the low rates of Hispanics who seek out mental health services.

Second, given the current political climate in the United States where immigration has been a major topic of focus, students may be exposed to negative rhetoric perpetuated about the immigrant identity, an identity with which they or their parents may identify. Political commentators and advocates have identified this negative and hostile rhetoric used by our previous president Donald Trump in describing those from Mexico (Klingner, 2018; Waxman, 2018). Familia Latinas Unidas seeks to address the implications this may have on student's mental health, the formation of their bicultural identities and consequent pursuit of higher education. In using the psychoeducational processing groups, the political climate will be taken into account and students and parents will have opportunities to reflect on impacts, while drawing out strengths in order to counteract potential negative consequences on the mental health of students. By taking a whole family approach, Familias Latinas Unidas will give parents and their students an opportunity to process this and similar challenges. Families will also be presented with resources in their communities such as local consulates that can provide legal aid and further legal resources specific for the needs of each family. Families will also be informed of resources found within higher education institutions that can support their students after enrollment. All of this effort will be in order to mitigate the potential psychological impact of the negative rhetoric previously identified. Families and students will benefit from the program celebrating culture and the integration of bicultural identities. In a Western society where the dominant culture is celebrated, Familias Latinas Unidas will be a place where the culture of each individual will be recognized,

celebrated, and fostered.

Third, psychoeducational processing groups will be used as the delivery model for Familias Latinas Unidas. As found in Russel and Doucette's review of the literature (2012), group therapy has been found to strengthen the therapeutic experience for the Latino community likely due to individuals experiencing group homogeneity by engaging others with similar backgrounds. The objective of using a group modality is so that each individual will get the opportunity to create a community with other parents and students with similar challenges while also decreasing the isolating experiences that are many times present for first generation Hispanic students. In creating community, families and students will have the opportunity to create solidarity, networks, rely on each other as resources, support systems, while decreasing the many times isolating experience of being a first-generation Hispanic student.

Fourth, a program such as Familias Latinas Unidas is needed due to their being a historical push towards assimilation rather than integration for bicultural youth as integration was perceived as threatening to mainstream culture, (Guimond, De Oliveira, Kamiesiki, & Sidanius, 2010). Assimilation as defined by Berry in 1980 is a form of acculturation where an individual forsakes their country of origin's culture and assimilates into the dominant culture. Integration on the other hand is when an individual keeps their country of origin's culture while incorporating the dominant culture into their cultural identity. Recently, Schwarts et al. (2019) using a sample of 873 Hispanic students from a college in Miami conducted a 12 day longitudinal study to analyze how bicultural identity integration and hybridizing and alternating can impact the psychosocial functioning of the students, where bicultural identity integration was the individualized

intersection of mainstream culture and ethnic cultures and hybridizing or alternating is the process of interconnecting or drawing in the individuals cultural identities. The results demonstrated that when there was a belief that both cultures are compatible and in harmony the individual developed a cultural and sense of self mixing both cultural influences and creating their own culture. Therefore, Familias Latinas Unidas intends to continue the effort of integration in an effort to prevent a return to assimilation seen in the previous decade. In FLU, the topic of creating a bicultural identity will be addressed through the process groups. Parents and their children will have the opportunity to speak about and address this and formulate their own individual bicultural identities.

Fifth, because of *familismo*, a value found to still be of importance in the Hispanic community through recent research, parents are being included so that they may be a part of this conversation with their children (Bermúdez, Kirkpatrick, Hecker, & Torres-Robles, 2010). Familismo is the concept that family is important above all else. By taking a family approach, FLU will be incorporating an important value within the Hispanic community. Through this integration, parents can serve as support to their children while also being able to openly talk about challenges faced in their communities. Familias Latinas Unidas will incorporate parents into the delivery of services in order to strengthen the success of students. A combined approach that includes parents and students classified as first-generation Hispanic students was also a component missing from the preliminary search of existing programs.

Familias Latinas Unidas will benefit the profession by growing the cross-sectional work of mental health, education, and culture. In doing so, the profession has the opportunity to address the mental health needs of an increasingly growing population,

estimated to be the largest minority. This cross-sectional work, though very specific, will benefit the profession by expanding its reach and bridging areas that have not been a focal point for this community previously. The profession also has the opportunity to provide mental health services to a community that many times evades mental health support. By using psychoeducational process groups, families will experience mental health support in a less threatening approach by bringing in other students and families with similar challenges. This will allow for the profession to make headway with service delivery and retention.

In a time where social justice and activism has been in the forefront, Familias Latinas Unidas can serve as a resource for therapist, educators, and community advocates as it presents a plan to actively support youth and families in the pursuit of higher education. In the pursuit of educational equity, and in the words of Martin Luther King Jr “The job of the school is to teach so well that family background is no longer an issue”, Familias Latinas Unidas takes a step in addressing, validating, and mitigating cultural stress as experienced by first generation Hispanic students in order to clear a pathway to higher education. This program can be used by therapists within the school system, educators promoting higher education, and community advocates, all aligned with the purpose of educational equity.

CHAPTER THREE

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal One

The first goal of Familias Latinas Unidas for both the parent and teen groups will be to increase awareness of culture, language, and the impacts of mental health as it relates to a bicultural identity. The outcome objective of this goal for the parent groups will be twofold: to increase knowledge on biculturalism and to implement knowledge in fostering a bicultural identity in their children. The process objectives for the parent groups will include dialogue to define biculturalism, including culture and language, identify unique challenges experienced by being bicultural, innovate ideas in support of children creating their identities, present data regarding the mental health impacts of being bicultural and how the parents can support their children in mitigating these stressors.

Similarly, in the teen group following the goal of increasing awareness of culture, language and the impacts of mental health as it relates to a bicultural identity, the outcome objectives will include increasing knowledge of biculturalism and using that knowledge in creating their own unique identities through the lens of integration. The process objectives in the teen group will also be obtained through dialogue where discussion will be held using the framework of integration and how this will apply to teens creating/defining their culture. Secondly, and similar to the parent group, mental health impacts on biculturalism will be presented to the teens in order to bring these potential experiences to the surface and address these challenges if needed, while also

taking a strength-based approach in identifying strength and resilience found within their challenges.

Additionally, in the teen group, there will be a goal for teens to develop their bilingual abilities through an increased use of Spanish and English as reported by teens by the end of the program. The outcome objectives include clients increasing understanding regarding the benefits of having bilingual skills as well as implementing their bilingual skills with frequency. The process objectives for this goal include dialogue that focuses on the benefits of being bilingual, identify the linguistic challenges that may surface in obtaining mastery over both languages, and identify people, places, and situations where they could practice their bilingual skills in order to strengthen their bilingual abilities.

Goal Two

The second goal for the parent and teen group is to increase the percentage of parents and teens who view higher education as important measured by posttest. The outcome objectives for this goal include parents and teens increasing knowledge about higher education and consequently identifying higher education as “very important” through the use of a post-test. The process objectives include increased understanding of the benefits derived by obtainment of a degree, identify common challenges first year college students experience and identify location/office within college/university where help could be obtained. Dialogue will be used with the parents to formulate and implement ideas in stimulating their children towards the pursuit of higher education. In the teen group, dialogue will be used to generate roadmaps each teen can use in pursuit of

higher education.

Goal Three

Third, Familias Latinas Unidas has the goal of establishing community linkages between families and community resources. In both the teen and parent groups, by taking an informative approach, the outcome objectives include increasing knowledge regarding resources found in community and consequently increasing use of community resources. Community resources can many times become underused due to recipient's lack of knowledge regarding the resource. Therefore, the process objectives will include introducing participants to the resources found in their specific communities, and also providing contact information to key services providers.

Goal Four

Fourth, Familias Latinas Unidas has a goal of increasing the knowledge of community immigration resources available to participants of the teen and parent groups. The outcome objective of this goal is to increase knowledge about the legalization process to all participants. The process objectives of this goal include introducing participants to the legalization process, informing participants of their legal rights, and provide legal resources/information to participants.

Goal Five

Fifth, Familias Latinas Unidas has the goal for the parent and teen groups of supporting the mental health of participants by establishing support networks amongst

program participants. The outcome objectives include parents and student experiencing solidarity, comradery, and reduced isolation thus supporting their mental health. The process objectives will be achieved through rapport building during group dialogue, opportunities for engagement before and after groups, and the identification of each group member as a candidate for their support networks.

Goal Six

The last goal of Familias Latinas Unidas is to increase dialogue between parents and teens regarding cultural stress and strengths as well as higher education. The outcome objectives will be for parents and teens to have open conversations about cultural stress, inherent strengths, and pursuit of higher education in order to strengthen the parent-child dyad and thus decrease the alienating experience many first-generation experience as found in the literature. The process objectives will be fostered through breakout groups at the end of every group where parents and teens will have an opportunity to share insights, challenges, hopes and aspirations.

Goals and Objectives Outline

Goal 1

Increase awareness of culture, language, and the impacts of mental health as it relates to a bicultural identity.

Goal 1a (Teens)

Develop bilingual abilities through an increased use of Spanish and English as reported by teens by the end of the program.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (Parents)

Increase knowledge on biculturalism and to implement knowledge in fostering a bicultural identity in their children

Objective 1 (Teens)

Increasing knowledge of biculturalism and use knowledge to create unique identity through lens of integration.

Objective 1a (Teens)

Increase understanding regarding the benefits of having bilingual skills as well as implementing bilingual skills with frequency.

Goal 2

Increase the percentage of parents and teens who view higher education as important measured by posttest.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (Parents and Teens)

Increase knowledge about higher education and consequently identifying higher education as “very important” through the use of a post-test.

Goal 3

Establish community linkages between families and community resources.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (Parents and Teens)

Increase knowledge regarding resources found in community and consequently increase use of community resources.

Goal 4:

Increase knowledge of community immigration resources available to participants.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (Parents and Teens):

To increase knowledge about the legalization process to all participants.

Goal 5

Support the mental health of participants by establishing support networks amongst program participants.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (Parents and Teens)

Participants to experience solidarity, comradery, and reduced isolation thus supporting their mental health.

Goal 6

Increase dialogue between parents and teens regarding cultural stress and strengths as well as higher education.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (Parents and Teens)

Strengthen the parent-child dyad and decrease the alienating experience many first-generation experience as found in the literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Construction

Gathering inspiration from the changes to language in philosophy, advances in science history, “sociology of knowledge and poststructural literary theory” Gergen began conceptualizing Social Constructionism in the 1970’s with these ideas becoming prominent in the 1990’s (Wang, 2016 Pg. 566). In addition, Marxist arguments regarding capitalist economies were also foundational to social construction in that they demonstrated “(1) the possible ideological basis of virtually all truth claims, including those shared within the sciences and (2) the specious belief that propositions about the world function as pictures or mirrors of this world” (Wang, 2016 Pg. 568). Gergen argued that different from current theories, he believed a priori is not found individually in people but in the social exchange they partake in. Gergen argued that while Marxist theory placed its focus on the community it committed the same mistake as other theories that focused on the individual given that both place the focus on a bounded entity. Gergen proposed that an “unbounded relational process” is instead what produces the concepts of the community and individual (Wang, 2016 Pg. 569). Constructionist believe that communities as whole agree on understandings of what is real and this ultimately what guides their actions. Interestingly, Gergen avoids using the term social constructionism because to him it postulates ideas as complete and fixed.

Gergen argues that the origins of all things we hold to be good, rational or real are found in the process used for relating. FLU takes this theoretical concept into account by

making use of a relational process in the service delivery model. Gergen adds that “relational leading refers to the process of generating, sustaining, undermining, or creating the meanings from which expectations, motivation, dedication, satisfaction, and actions are derived” (Gergen, 2015, Pg. 199). In making use of this concept, FLU will create a community for first generation Hispanic students and mobilize the creation and revision of values, through community building, towards higher education. Social construction proposes that what is real and what is good comes from engaging in social process. It is here that understandings of the world come to fruition, through relationships. Thus, it is so that constructionists celebrate relationship over individualism. Relationship participation leads to the acquisition of values, a sense of justice and joy (Gergen, 2015). In capitalizing on the understanding of how values and world views are created through social process, FLU works to generate a culture that a first-generation Hispanic student can adopt, one that values higher education, in order to fight against poverty and towards academic equity. Further, taking into account the importance of relationships identified through this theory, a concept that can be readily embraced by the target population due to Familismo, FLU capitalizes on a culturally salient belief and imbeds it into the program experience. Through the inclusion of psychoeducational processing groups, FLU incorporates these concepts by valuing relationships, co-creation of ideas, and creation of a sense of unity on shared values.

Gergen argues that “symbolic interactionism fosters an appreciation of human interdependence. Because each of us draws our sense of self from others, we are thoroughly interrelated” (pg. 99). Constructionists argue that relationships are the catalyst for emotional experiences such as joy and sorrow, and our construction of good and evil.

FLU's focus on creating a shared narrative with its participants will be mobilized to increase higher education participation amongst first generation Hispanic students. Gergen argues that the constructionist therapist generates meaning out of relationships, where relationships take center stage. It is also through this meaning generation that patterns and actions become reasonable. Relationships are able to remain in harmony when understanding is used. Gergen presents mediation as an example of collaboration, problem solving, and understanding where two opposing parties come together to air their differences and arrive at options they can both agree on. In establishing successful dialogue, the other party must understand the values one stands for. In order to mitigate disagreements or discord due to misinformation regarding higher education, FLU seeks to work with the parent and student in addressing the individual views of and value attributed to higher education, cultural strengths and factors that contribute to cultural stress. Gergen argues that if relationships were of importance this would create small room for issues that lead to death such as alienation, antagonism, and power struggles (Gergen, 2015). Previous research has demonstrated that depression, issues of self-esteem and social isolation increase for minority students who perceive themselves as other. By creating a community for both the students and their families using the concepts of Social Constructionism, FLU works to mitigate this barrier.

Gergen speaks about the socialization of the mind. He cites *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger and Luckmann, 1996) where the authors argue that a "taken-for-granted reality" is constructed after a period of socialization and reliance on the way our world has been conceptualized. FLU seeks to challenge taken-for-granted realities that could be embraced by first generation Hispanic students, for example,

“college is not for me” created by the idea of others before them. Language used in objective reality is many times also used to create hierarchies where some are included and others excluded. Gergen identifies the bipolarity of our constructions and how they inevitably categorize one over the other, placing value in one area while undervaluing another, creating a sense of superiority, simply through seemingly mundane constructs such as religions, organizations or teams. When one community’s realities are seen as universal or what is really real, this in turn creates oppression and exclusion for other communities. For a democratic institution, individual thought and independent thinking is an essential right for each individual (Gergen, 2015). As issues of systemic racism continue to exist in our society, FLU will work with first generation Hispanic students in order to increase awareness of their inherent value through the promotion of higher education as a pathway to success.

Gergen clarifies that the argument for constructionists is not against using realist terms but in treating those realities as unquestionable or universally real. In understanding the language that was used in creating reality, individuals can free themselves from the effect of said language. Meaning making occurs where communication takes place, it is here that traditions intersect, and new ways of expression are created. In looking at how problems are created, one must look at how reality is defined. Problems exist if it is agreed upon that they exist, therefore any situation can be negotiated as problematic, and the opposite is also true. Ideas such as poor performance would not exist if it were not for concepts such as success and failure, and distinctions between the individual and others.

Gergen argues that if “we did not construct the world in terms of separated

individuals, worries about self-esteem would evaporate” (pg. 95). Further, Gergen cautions that eliminating alternatives due to commitments to the Real essentially limits the possibilities available for action. In declaring what one knows to be true, the door for dialogue is closed (Gergen, 2015). In taking caution, FLU seeks to challenge any misguided narratives that first generation Hispanic students could create about themselves regarding the ability to be successful in pursuit of higher education. Constructionism thus is not a dogma that one must commit to, instead, it is like action tools that one can use at will. For example, many first-generation Hispanic students may be accustomed to hearing that they will just be another statistic who will not graduate or go to college as recounted by one of the interviewees in a study conducted by Borrero (2011). Borrero interviewed soon to graduate, first generation, Hispanic high school seniors enrolled in four-year institutions. The sample used consisted of 8 Hispanic high school seniors who had immigrant status or their parents did. Using a qualitative approach, Borrero discovered four themes identified as “college talk, dynamic family roles, school as a support system and community resources” as factors related to these students’ pursuit of higher education (Borrero, 2011, Pg. 26). In FLU, a contrary narrative that will be introduced is that college is an obtainable option. This narrative will be evidenced to the target population by pointing them to growing body of first-generation Hispanic students attending college, addressing cultural stress and the internal challenges that come with it, and bringing in the parents in being part of this evolution. This new narrative will challenge preexisting limit setting narratives by formulating a pathway that will address the logistical parts of higher educational achievement and also the psychological aspects attributed to cultural stress while shining a light on the cultural

strengths found in culture.

Gergen identifies the term ideological critiques as critiques that appear to postulate neutral truths but that reveal the writer's or speakers underlying values, political agenda, or interests. Constructionism looks at issues such as our ability to predict and challenges us to reflect on how we came to these predictions and who they benefit. FLU incorporates this ideology by challenging notions that could be socially learned by first generation Hispanic students, including the narrative of a lack of pursuit of higher education. Gergen identifies that in social construction "progress is about improvement; something becomes better and better. Yet, constructionists ask, "better for whom?" Values are created within various communities, and what is better for one may actually be worse for another" (Pg. 232). FLU takes into account poverty, disparity, and lack of access to opportunities that Hispanic students face and works to shift this tide into the direction of opportunity and success through the navigation of cultural stress, creation of a shared community, and pursuit of higher education.

Education affects the way we live. In this sense, educational practices are political in implication. Educational practices teach students about hierarchy or democracy depending on the way the teacher runs their classroom; thus, these practices create political implications for students. Students learn about the individual ideology through their academic pursuits by being evaluated individually, learning that their task is to ensure the success of only themselves (Gergen, 2015). FLU acknowledges that this individualism is contrary to the concept of *familismo* present in the Hispanic community and uses this through the incorporation of the psychoeducational processing groups in order to capitalize on *familismo* in bridging cultural stress and the pursuit of higher

education.

In looking at the application of Social Construction and Human Ecology, FLU will adapt the premise that our environmental conditions do affect the developmental trajectory of each individual. This coupled with the “stories” we learn about ourselves based on our social environments, can determine the actions we will take and the notions of our abilities and limitations. Social constructionist theory provides a framework whereby the researchers are able to compile the stories of each individual participant while assuming their truth is manifest through messages and interpretations received from the environment in which they exist (Daly, 2007). FLU seeks to incorporate both theories as foundational in the mission FLU seeks to accomplish, the generation of productive social constructs in support of higher education achievement for first generation Hispanic students in order to obtain social equity through higher education.

Human Ecology Theory

Ecology is the study of a unique interrelationship between organic and inorganic life forms and the environment. Ecology argues that life forms and the environment cannot be separated as they are parts in a greater whole (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, (Eds.), 1993). In the study of Home Economics are found assumptions that influenced the ecological systems theory regarding the interrelationship between humans and their environment. These assumptions include the beliefs that there is an interdependence between the physical and social environments that have a direct influence on the development of humans, their behavior and quality of life, that the environment provides resources for humans, and that humans should improve their

livelihoods by the modification, designs and choice of their environments. This assumes that humans have control not only of their lives but also of their environments (Boss., et al, 1993). The focus here is in the continuous interaction between humans and their environment. This points to an interplay between the biological make up of humans as well as their social environment. A way to modify or design the resources in the social environment for first generation Hispanics is through the pursuit of higher education as will be supported in Familias Latinas Unidas.

There are components that humans cannot control however they can adapt to and these include climate and all acts of nature (Boss., et al, 1993). Arguably, there are additional components that humans cannot control such as the environment they are born into and the resources available at birth. Human ecology holds the perspective that there is an interdependence between the quality of life humans experience and the quality of their environment that cannot be separated (Boss., et al, 1993). Given that these two conditions are inseparable, it is up to each individual to enhance the quality of their environment as is encouraged in this theory. Factors occurring in the environment of a first-generation Hispanic student affecting their pursuit of higher education can include access to academic resources, financial limitations, or lack of information regarding opportunities. Familias Latinas Unidas seeks to address these limitations by creating a pathway of knowledge to better equip students in the pursuit of higher education, thus enhancing the environment and quality of life of first-generation Hispanic students.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, the author of Human Ecology, in his text, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* published in 1979, writes in greater detail the definitions, hypotheses, and propositions of Human Ecology. Human

ecology, following its influence from Home Economics, looks at how humans, either as individuals or groups, interact with their environment, notably how humans adapt to their environments (Boss., et al, 1993). This is a fascinating concept as this unique focus takes into account the environment that a person is found in but also looks at humans in the form of individual, group, and society. The environment can be the physical environment that the individual or family is in but we can also look at the environment in terms of the social climate Latino families find themselves in when moving to the United States.

Bronfenbrenner describes the ecology of human development as a scientific study that studies the interconnections of growing humans and the everchanging setting such as humans develop in, how the setting affects development, as well as the larger contexts that the setting is found in. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Further, Bronfenbrenner defines development as “a lasting change” in how an individual “perceives and deals with his environment”, and enduring change that affects other places and times. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Pg. 3; Pg 14) Further in his definition of developmental ecology, Bronfenbrenner clarifies that developmental ecology is not limited to one setting, instead it pays attention to the relationships between settings as well as to larger settings and contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner proposes that when a person transitions from one setting to another their development is enhanced when information from one setting is made available to another on a revolving basis (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The way development is affected when a person transitions from one setting to another depends on how development was fostered in the previous setting, balancing challenges and supports in the new setting, and the interconnections between the old and new settings (Bronfenbrenner, U., 1979). Bronfenbrenner argues that a developing person learns and

develops when they engaged in “more complex patterns of reciprocal activity” with someone whom they have developed a meaningful relationship with and the balance of power shifts in their favor (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Pg. 289).

Thus, Human Ecology is concerned with five levels in the environment identified as micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems and they are differentiated based on the immediacy of the developing person (Boss., et al, 1993). Previous hypotheses have specified conditions for the micro-, meso-, and exosystem that support psychological growth taking into account a person’s stage of development, their physical health, and how integrated they are with the present social order as opposed to their alienation from it. Ecological transitions materialize when changes to roles or settings occur in a person’s ecological environment. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In addition to the five levels of environment, Bronfenbrenner proposes four types of interconnections a developing person can experience. The first is what he refers to as “multisetting participation”. In multisetting participation, a person can engage in activities within multiple settings such as at home and at school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 pg 209). Second, there is indirect linkage. Here, a person does not have active participation in two settings but a connection can be made through an intermediary link, or third party, connecting people in the different settings. Third, there are intersetting communications. Here, messages are communicated to people between settings and fourth, is intersetting knowledge. Bronfenbrenner refers to intersetting knowledge as information or experiences existing in one setting regarding another (Bronfenbrenner, U., 1979).

In looking at each system closer, we inspect the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner defines a microsystem as a “pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations

experienced by the developing person in a given setting” (Bronfenbrenner, Pg. 22, 1979). In the microsystem the individual is experiencing patterns, roles, and interpersonal relations first hand and directly. For example, a first-generation Hispanic student in pursuit of higher education. Within the microsystem of this student is his family, peers, and siblings. There are direct interactions between family, peers and siblings as well as roles that this student may have with in his family and peer group. In the micro system, Human Ecology analyses how this system composed of family, peers, and siblings impacts a student’s decision and outcome in pursuit of higher education. Given that Human Ecology pays attention to the relationship this student has within smaller and larger settings and how it ultimately affects his development, the following system to play a role in the student’s pursuit of higher education is the mesosystem.

The mesosystem holds the interrelationships between two or more settings that a person engages in. Bronfenbrenner argues that a person’s transition from the microsystem to the mesosystem is supported if the person does not make the transition alone but with rather with someone part of the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Further, the development produced in the mesosystem is improved “if the role demands in the different settings are compatible and if the roles, activities, and dyads in which the developing person engages encourage the development of mutual trust, a positive orientation, goal consensus between settings and an evolving balance of power in favor of the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Pg. 212). As we apply this concept to a first-generation Hispanic student, the student’s transition into higher education, found in the meso system is enhanced if the roles found in the microsystem, amongst her family, peers, and siblings, is compatible with her new roles and demands found in her transition

to higher education. Further, Human Ecology argues that if in her microsystem there is mutual trust and agreement on the goal for higher education, the student will have a more successful transition. In Familias Latinas Unidas, we seek to mitigate the barriers that may surface between the microsystem, or family demands, with the mesosystem, higher education, in order to better equip and secure the student's success in their pursuit of higher education. It is vital for Familias Latinas Unidas to incorporate the microsystem (parents) into the program to support a student's transition into higher education. Through Familias Latinas Unidas, parents will be informed regarding the benefits of higher education so that agreement of goals can be secured, and trust enhanced as the student makes her transition to higher education.

Human Ecology argues that there are also factors produced by the exosystem that will affect the student's pursuit and achievement of higher education. The developing person does not actively participate in the exosystem, however its events do affect him/her. Bronfenbrenner provides examples of the exosystem as they would pertain to a child that include "the parent's place of work, a school class attended by an older sibling, the parents' network of friends, the activities of the local school board, and so on". (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Pg. 25). When looking at a first-generation Hispanic student in pursuit of higher education, the exosystem may include education policies, educational opportunities provided through their academic institution, district zoning, funding for the school district etc., that will affect the first-generation Hispanic student's pursuit of higher education. These events occurring in the exosystem can have direct negative implications for the student. Familias Latinas Unidas recognizes this may occur and therefore will provide the student and family with resources found in their communities

with the intention of bridging gaps caused in the exosystem.

The fourth system identified by Bronfenbrenner is the macrosystem. The macrosystem is defined as the “blueprint of the ecological environment” with an ability to be altered depending on the social order found in the lower order systems (micro-, meso-, exo-) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Pg. 289). Further, the macrosystem includes the culture, subculture, belief systems, and ideologies found in the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. As first-generation Hispanic students, the duality of cultures they are exposed to as children throughout their adulthood life, is one of the challenges they will have to address in order to successfully transition from one system to the next. Familias Latinas Unidas intends to identify this challenge and provide the student and families with resources through the psychoeducational processing groups that will aid in converting this challenge into a strength for both the parent and student.

In the Chrono system lie large life transitions, for example divorce, or a move to a new home. These large life transitions can also affect the student’s trajectory and pursuit of higher education.

The systems exchange was presented starting with the micro system and moving outwards; however, it is important to note that the outer systems directly affect the inner systems as well. Therefore, the directionality of effect can be seen or conceptualized from inner to outer, as well from outer systems to the inner systems. For example, the events that occur in the Chronosystem, i.e. life transitions, and Macrosystem, i.e. culture and belief systems, ultimately affect the most inner system, the individual and their life trajectory as much as the individual may impact these outer systems.

In Familias Latinas Unidas we seek to identify how issues from the most outward

spheres, the chrono and macrosystems, ripples in on each dimension, ultimately affecting the individual in the microsystem. In looking at the ecology of human development, the macrosystem holds the values, norms, and patterns that affect the development of humans within their cultural structure through the micro-, meso-, and exosystems (Boss., et al, 1993); therefore, rendering true the need to look at the outer systems (macro & exo) and their effects in the inner systems (meso) as they related to the pursuit of higher education for first generation Hispanic students (micro).

Arbona & Nora (2007) in their study found how important the socio-cultural environment can be for first generation Hispanics when deciding to pursue higher education. This study focused on the factors that contribute to high school Hispanic students remaining in college or obtaining their undergraduate degrees by using the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 88-2000) data base. Specifically, this study sought to identify students who initially enrolled in two- or four-year institutions and then based on the college enrolled in (two vs four-year institutions), the degree obtainment of these students. The inclusion criteria for the present study included only Hispanic students enrolled in a community college or four-year institution, who participated in the NELS from 1988-2000. Arbona and Nora found that students who were in challenging academic tracks and had higher expectations for their education than those who were not, were more likely to enroll in a two- or four-year institution. Further, they also found that these academic expectations were fostered and strengthened if their peers held similar expectations and educational plans. As proposed in Human Ecology theory, the social cultural environment has a direct influence on individuals as it did in shaping the academic outlook for the students in this 2007 study.

The authors argue that family ecology theory places responsibility on scholars and practitioners to tend to the unique issues of groups and subcultures who are lacking in “power, self-determination, and access to resources, and who experience discrimination and prejudice” (Boss., et al, 1993 pg 427) akin to the needs and experiences of first-generation Hispanic students. Further, the authors also argue that “Ecological theory with its holistic view of people and environmental interactions is especially well suited to examine issues of inequity and deprivation among groups in society with respect to resources, justice, power, and freedom” (Boss., et al, 1993 pg 427). In using an ecological theoretical framework Arana, Castañeda-Sound, Blanchard, & Aguilar, (2011) studied factors that contributed to the graduation of undergraduate Hispanic students at a private Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Discussions were held with current and former Hispanic students using a qualitative method in order to identify the factors that led or deterred degree completion. The HSI used for this study was comprised of a Hispanic population of over 70%- and first-generation population of over 60%. Data from 33 Junior and senior students was collected who were randomly selected from the humanities and sciences department. Three ecological factors appeared to contribute or hinder college persistence, first, the context of the student such as their status as first generation or family issues, the college context servicing as a bridge or hurdle for the student, and last the interconnection between the student context and the college context. The researchers found that motivation students received from loved ones, family members, mentors, and friends contributed to their perseverance and achievement of long-term goals. On the other hand, students who were burdened with family responsibilities and crises seemed to struggle more, eventually dropping out of school. In

the study, students who persisted enthusiastically shared how it was their parents and family members who motivated them to pursue a college education and who encouraged hard work (Arana, Castañeda-Sound, Blanchard, & Aguilar, 2011).

Many families coming from Central America and Mexico migrate to the United States due to poverty, civil wars, crime, and scarcity of resources. They seek to find refuge in a country like the United States. Familias Latinas Unidas supports the notion that education is fundamental for the success of immigrant families. Through the lens provided by Human Ecology theory we are better able to see the significance of this need.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Familias Latinas Unidas (FLU) target population is first-generation Hispanic parents and their high school-aged children. First generation Hispanics have been identified for this program due to their steady population growth in the United States and the disparities that continue to exist in their attendance of higher education. The 2010 United States Census indicates that there are 50.5 million Hispanics/Latinos residing in the United States (Passel., Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). In the 2000-2010 decade, the Hispanic population accounted for 56% of the nation's growth (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). The focus of FLU will be to increase the pursuit of higher education for first generation Hispanic students. FLU takes a unique approach by addressing the convergence of cultural stress on mental health and its effect on higher education enrollment for first generation Hispanic students not currently addressed by other programs. FLU will be addressing this overarching factor affecting the mental health of first-generation Hispanic youth.

Familias Latina Unidas aims to increase educational attainment of first-generation Latinos by taking a systematic approach. FLU will work with the family unit (parents and teens) to address the cultural stress factors that may hinder the pursuit of higher education. FLU seeks to increase cultural proactivity through the braiding of cultures. The braiding approach will help teens learn how to incorporate both cultures into one by teaching them ways to synthesize their dual cultures and form a unique bicultural identity.

Parents and teens will attend 10 weeks of psychoeducational process groups

where the following topics will be addressed in the parent group: the development of a bicultural identity with a primary focus on language and culture and its impact on mental health, creating support networks, immigration resources, community linkages, and a heavy focus on the promotion of higher education. The psychoeducational processing group for the teens will address the development of their unique bicultural identities, creating support networks, community linkages, and a similarly heavy focus on higher education. Teens and parents will attend a hybrid of separate and joint sessions depending on the information reviewed. The parents will meet first and the teens will meet second when groups are held separately.

After ten weeks, parents and teens will attend two additional weeks where focused-family sessions will be held and participants will have the opportunity to discuss the experiences they had in groups and identify and discuss any insights gathered through group process. Throughout the 12 weeks, participants will be encouraged to use each other as resources. By doing this, participants will not only be creating a system of support that will aid in their successful completion of the program, but also create a long-term system of support, meeting one of the goals of FLU.

In consideration of the fact that most groups will occur in the evening as well as the energy needed to participate in the program, food will be provided free of cost to participants at each session. Each week a Latin-American country will be chosen and a cultural dish will be provided from that country in order to promote cultural pride and celebration of Latin American diversity. The hypothesis is that if first generation parents participate in FLU they will experience less parent-child culture stress, increase a sense of community and identity in the United States, and by increasing their knowledge of the

higher education process increase and strengthen their support of their children's higher educational pursuits. Similarly, teens will experience a decrease in parent-child cultural stress, be empowered in their bicultural identities, and increase likelihood of higher education enrollment.

Several options for the physical location of FLU implementation were considered. Options included mental health clinics, churches, non-profit community organizations and high schools. The author believes that the most strategically advantageous choice is a local high school. Specifically, a local high school with the highest numbers of first-generation Hispanic students in the target area. This choice allows easy access for the target population to attend FLU given that the location will be a known location within the neighborhood of the target population. Further, a school provides easy access for the technology and various rooms that will be needed to host FLU as well as larger rooms for when the resource fair and joint groups are held.

Potential barriers that families may experience in attending FLU may be a lack of transportation, lack of childcare, and the time commitment necessary to participate. FLU will attempt to mitigate these barriers by encouraging participants to carpool when available, seeking funding to provide public transportation vouchers to participants, and offering for childcare while parents participate in their group sessions. The author anticipates that additional barriers that may be unique to individual family participants may arise. These will be managed on an individual basis with the goal of increasing accessibility for each participant family.

FLU also recognizes that some of its participants may be undocumented students or families. While higher education resources are limited for these students and their

families, the program welcomes their participation as information will be provided regarding immigration as well as higher education for undocumented students. Additionally, the program will ensure that financial resources for undocumented as well as documented immigrants are discussed during the program.

Recruitment

An open invitation and enrollment instructions will be provided to every high school within a local school district. Advertisement efforts will also be made through speaking engagements during AVID class periods and in consultation with school academic advisors. Promotional efforts will also be made at after school programs, and by distributing informational sheets advertising the program to Hispanic households. Inclusion criteria for the program are Hispanic parents with teenage children in high school who would be first-generation college attendees. Written consent from parents must be granted for teens to participate. Given that FLU is tailored to first generation Hispanics this program can only be open to this specific population. Incentives for participation will include dinner provided every week.

Treatment

For ten weeks teens and parents will attend psychoeducational processing groups using a hybrid approach of separate and joint sessions where each of the following topics will be explored: the development of a bicultural identity with a primary focus on language and culture and its impact on mental health, creating support networks, immigration resources, community linkages, and a heavy focus on the promotion of

higher education.

Conversations will be held with parents regarding culture, language, and the impacts of cultural stress on the mental health of their children. Parents will be informed regarding the benefits of higher education and introduced to the process of applying to higher education in efforts to increase their awareness of the process. Families will be provided with information about community resources such as the Family Resource Centers that provide informational resources and aid for housing, food and mental health, in order to increase their knowledge regarding the resources available to them. Further, given the first-generation status of FLU's target population, an immigration attorney will present an overview of immigration information, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in a joint session of parents and high schoolers. The mental health of participants will be supported by the creation of support networks among group participants. Finally, FLU has the goal of increasing dialogue between parents and teens regarding cultural stress, inherent strengths, and the pursuit of higher education. Parent groups will be held once a week from 60 min – 100 min each session depending on whether the session is joint or separate, ending with two focused-family sessions upon completion of the 10 weeks of psychoeducational processing groups. The current length of each session has been set to 60 min – 100 min in order to decrease time commitment as a barrier for participation. Consideration will be given to expanding the time of sessions if it is found that participants would benefit from longer processing periods and this change would not present a significant barrier to participants' commitment.

Teens ages 15-18 will also attend 10 weeks of psychoeducational processing groups that will address the development of their unique bicultural identities, creating

support networks, community linkages, and a similarly heavy focus on higher education. Through open dialogue teens will be supported in their creation of a bicultural identity through the lens of integration. Additionally, the benefits of being bilingual will be stressed and the daily practice of this skill supported. Teens will be given information regarding the benefits of holding a college degree and receive assistance as they create their own roadmaps to achieving this goal. Teens will be informed about community resources that may benefit them in their pursuit of higher education or day to day living. Through the joint session previously identified, teens will be provided with overview information about DACA and immigration aid available in the community. The cross-sectionality of cultural stress and mental health will be addressed by the creation of community and comradery via FLU's service delivery format - psychoeducational processing groups. Teens will be encouraged to use each other as resources as they navigate cultural stress and the pursuit of higher education. Finally, the teens will also be supported via family focus sessions in increasing dialogue with their parents regarding cultural stress in order to mitigate this stressor and support the enrollment of higher education.

After the ten weeks of psychoeducational processing groups, participants will come together for two weeks where parents and children will engage in group dialogue to share their experiences with the topics explored. Within this safe environment, parents and children will be able to discuss previously-identified cultural stressors, language barriers, higher education, and biculturalism. FLU will end after 12 weeks.

FLU will seek funding for this program through local and community grants. For its initial implementation that is anticipated to occur in Orange County, California, the

author intends to pursue funding through the Orange County Community Foundation or the Orange County Grantmakers who provide grants such as the OCCF Equity in Education Grant Program and the Accelerate Change Together Anaheim grant.

Program Evaluation

There are two measurements that will be used at the beginning and end of each 12-week timeframe - pre- and post- measurement assessments. The two measurements are the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and the Perceived School Experience Scale (PSES). The MEIM was developed by Jean S. Phinney in 1992 in order to measure “two dimensions of ethnic identity in adolescents” (Corcoran, & Fischer, 2013 PG. 599). The measure was normed on 10 ethnic groups with a total sample of 5,423 adolescents. The measure includes twelve statements ranging from (5) Strongly agree to (1) Strongly disagree. Examples of the items found in the measure are “1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs” “3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means to me” “5. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to” (Corcoran, & Fischer, 2013 PG. 600). The MEIM is an appropriate measure for FLU because it will produce insights into the convergence of the participant’s wellbeing/mental health and their ethnic identity. This specific convergence is one that FLU is working to target, mitigating the cultural stressors that interfere with pursuit of higher education. At the end of 12 weeks, it is the goal of FLU that scores will reflect a stronger ethnic identity, thus pointing to a mitigation of cultural stress.

The second measure, Perceived School Experience Scale (PSES) was developed

by Dawn Anderson-Butcher, Anthony Amorose, Aidyn Iachini and Annahita Ball in 2011. This 14-item measure address three protective factors: School Connectedness (SC), Academic Press (AP), and Academic Motivation (AM). The authors adopted Libbey's (2004) definition for school connectedness (SC) as the general perceptions students held regarding "their relationship to school" (Anderson-Butcher, Amorose, Iachini, & Ball, 2012, PG. 186). The specific items under SC examine the perceptions students have regarding their relationship with teachers, their sense of belonging, as well as the enjoyment and pride connected with school. Further, Lee & Smith, 1999, and McDill, Natriello, & Pallas, 1986 were referenced in defining Academic Press (AP). AP is defined as all school members, teachers and students included, having a similar or agreed upon focus on academic success and standards of achievement. Therefore, AP measures the degree in which students and teachers emphasize success and achievement standards (Corcoran, & Fischer, 2013). Lastly, in defining Academic Motivation (AM), the authors reference Long, Monoi, Harper, Knoblauch, & Murphy, (2007) to define AM as the "general interest, engagement, and enjoyment in learning and school" (Anderson-Butcher, Amorose, Iachini, & Ball, 2012, PG. 187). The specific items measuring academic motivation look at the students' degree of positive attitude, levels of confidence, enjoyment of challenges, and their value of the school experience. PSES was normed on 358 students in grades 7-12. Of the sample population 53% were female students and 71% were white. Examples of the items ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree include: AC "My school values students' learning" SC "I feel like I belong to my school" AM "I have enjoyed my school experiences so far" (Corcoran, & Fischer, 2013 PG. 626). These protective factors provide insight to the likelihood that students

will graduate, perform better academically, and experience fewer discipline factors. It is good for FLU to have insight into this information as school performance, sense of belonging, and academic motivation has been found to suffer when cultural stress is high. If protective factors are high at the end of 12 weeks, the likelihood of graduation and higher education enrollment may increase.

An auxiliary analysis that will occur is the test of differential effects. By specifically looking at differential historical effects the program developer will be able to identify any outside events that could skew the outcomes of the program. Since this program will be done over the course of 12 weeks, it will be important to know if in that course of time there were outside events that could have impacted the pre- and post-test scores. By observing this effect, the program developer will be able to conclude with the most certainty the effects of Familias Latinas Unidas. Examples of the questions that will be asked are: are there current policies or laws affecting your decision to pursue higher education? Is there a present national financial crisis impacting your decision to pursue higher education? Has a natural disaster occurred that has impacted your decision to pursue higher education? Historical context that includes time, political climate, and environmental factors will thus be taken into account in the determination of FLU's effectiveness.

Theory of Change

The theory of change underlying this program is - that if first generation Hispanic students and their parents are offered the resources described above participants will strengthen the parent/child dyad, increase cultural proactivity, mitigate mental health

effects of cultural stress, and students will increase enrollment in higher education.

Through pre- and post- questionnaires, the theory of change will be measured amongst participants.

The logic model that will be followed in order to create the program will be of inputs, outputs, and outcomes. This will include the group leaders that will be recruited for this program. Group leaders will need to have experience working with underrepresented populations. Population-specific challenges will be reviewed with group leaders prior to the onset of running groups. The targeted physical location will be a local high school with the largest first-generation Hispanic student population. This location needs multiple rooms to conduct the psychoeducation processing groups and childcare for participants. The technology that will be needed will comprise of white boards, computers, projectors, and speakers. Parents and teens will be expected to participate in at least 11 of the 12 psychoeducational processing groups. The program will aim to have an 80% success rate of program completion. Of those that complete the program, 50% will demonstrate an increase in knowledge of the information provided. This will be measured by pre- and post-tests. The desired long-term impact is for first generation Hispanic students to occupy jobs that require college degrees, increase wage earnings, and decrease rates of poverty.

The effectiveness of the program will be measured by an increase in knowledge on the six themes of FLU as identified on post-tests. Further effectiveness of the program will be measured by participants subsequent enrollment in higher education. Effectiveness will also be measured by the successful completion of the 12 weeks of psychoeducational processing groups. Participants will be asked to rate how effective and

relevant the psychoeducational processing groups were for them, thus effectiveness will be measured by high scores on participants' perceived effectiveness of the psychoeducational processing groups.

Program activities targeting goals and objectives will be reviewed weekly with group leaders. Meetings will be held with group leaders to ensure program fidelity. Group leaders will provide ideas on how group material can be modified to best fit their present group.

Data that demonstrates program effectiveness will be initially gathered over a 12-month period to improve quality of program. Data will be gathered through use of surveys that will assess participants' satisfaction with the program, program contents, and the goals and objectives envisioned by program. Data will be collected that will measure success rates and program completion.

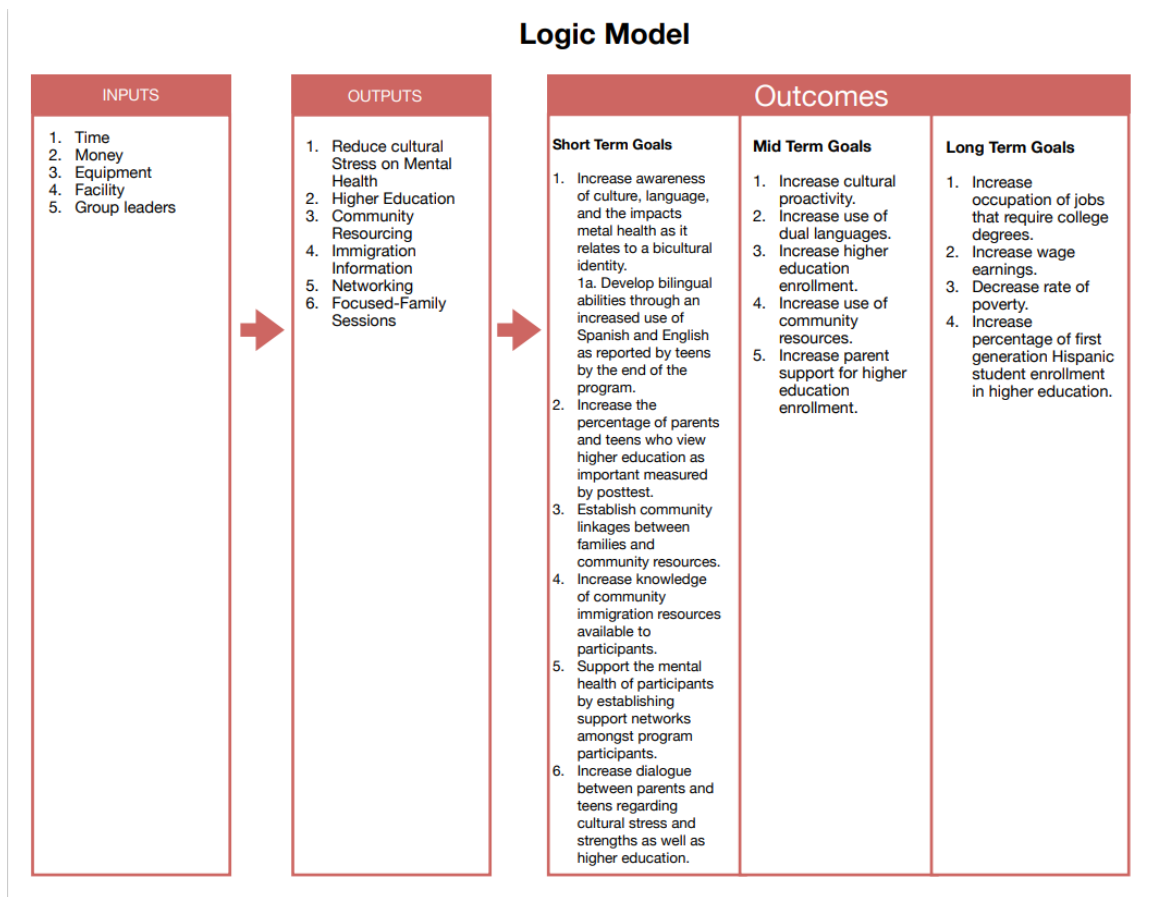


Figure 1. Logic Model

Goals and Objectives

First Theme: Cultural Stress on Mental Health

Goal 1:

Increase awareness of culture, language, and the impacts of mental health as it relates to a bicultural identity.

Goal 1a (Teens):

Develop bilingual abilities through an increased use of Spanish and English as reported by teens by the end of the program.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (parents): Increase knowledge on biculturalism and to implement knowledge in fostering a bicultural identity in their children.

Objective 1 (teens): Increase knowledge of biculturalism and use of knowledge to create unique identity through lens of integration.

Objective 1a (teens): Increase understanding regarding the benefits of bilingualism as well as implementation of bilingual skills with increased frequency.

Process objectives. Complete 3 weeks of separate psychoeducational processing groups in order to target the theme of Cultural Stress on Mental health and accomplish associated goals and objectives.

Group activities.

1.1 Introduce participants to group and provide summary of goals and objectives during the following 12 weeks.

1.2 Agree on group rules in order to create a safe space for participants to share stories.

1.3 Use worksheets and media to review intersection of biculturalism, cultural stress, and mental health.

1.4 Review mental health benefits found in research regarding integration and its impact in reducing cultural stress.

1.5 Group discussion on cultural stress parents have experienced firsthand and observed in their children.

1.6 Review financial benefits of being bilingual.

1.7 Group discussion on ways to support biculturalism in their children using integration, identifying fears regarding biculturalism, and reflections on research supporting benefits.

Second Theme: Higher Education

Goal 2

Increase the percentage of parents and teens who view higher education as important measured by posttest.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (parents and teens): Increase knowledge about higher education and consequently identifying higher education as “very important” through the use of a post-test.

Process objectives 1.Complete 2 weeks of separate psychoeducational processing groups in order to target the theme of Higher Education and accomplish the associated goals and objectives. 2.Complete 1 week of joint groups to review cost of higher education and financial assistance available.

Group activities

2.1 Introduce statistical benefits of individuals obtaining a college degree.

2.2 Group discussion regarding fears and motivation in pursuing higher

education.

2.3 Group discussion regarding supporting teens in obtaining higher education degree.

2.4 Guest speaker to review road maps to higher education with focus on requirements, applications, and differences between community college, Cal State universities, UC universities and private institutions.

2.5 Guest speaker to review financial aid including FAFSA, state and Pell grants, loans, in-state tuition and AB540.

Third Theme: Community Resourcing

Goal 3

Establish community linkages between families and community resources.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (parents and teens) Increase knowledge regarding resources found in community and consequently increase use of community resources.

Process objectives 1. Complete 1 week of separate psychoeducational processing groups in order to target the theme of Community Resourcing and accomplish the associated goals and objectives. 2. Complete 1 week of joint groups to host a Family Resource Center Fair.

Group activities

3.1 Family Resource Center representative to inform teens of community

and center resources focusing on mental health, after school programs, and college support programs.

3.2 Family Resource Center representative to inform families of community and center resources.

3.3 Family Resource Center fair

Fourth Theme: Immigration Information

Goal 4:

Increase knowledge of community immigration resources available to participants.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (parents and teens): to increase knowledge about the legalization process to all participants.

Process objectives. 1. Complete 1 week of joint psychoeducational processing groups in order to target the theme of Immigration Information and accomplish the associated goals and objectives.

Group activities.

4.1 Guest speaker to review immigration resources for students and parents.

Fifth Theme: Networking

Goal 5:

Support the mental health of participants by establishing support networks amongst program participants.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (parents and teens). Participants to experience solidarity, comradery, and reduced isolation thus supporting their mental health.

Process objectives. Complete 1 week of separate psychoeducational processing groups in order to target the theme of Networking and accomplish the associated goals and objectives.

Group activities.

5.1 Review benefits of networking and comradery

5.2 Initiate social gathering in celebration of group process completion with food, music, and comradery

Sixth Theme: Focused Family Sessions

Goal 6

Increase dialogue between parents and teens regarding cultural stress and strengths as well as higher education.

Outcome Objectives

Objective 1 (parents and teens): Strengthen the parent-child dyad and decrease the alienating experience many first-generation experience as found in the literature.

Process objectives: 1. Complete 2 weeks of Focused Family Sessions in order to target the theme of Focused Family sessions and accomplish the associated goals and objectives.

Group activities.

6.1 Review personal experiences with cultural stress.

6.2 Celebrate strengths

6.3 Program take- aways

6.4 Family activity: family creates symbolic art piece that represents how higher education and culture will be celebrated jointly.

This program is saturated with issues of diversity as its target population is first-generation Hispanics. By addressing an issue related to this minority, diversity will be addressed throughout this study. Diversity will be limited to Hispanics and Latinos. The issues of acculturation are present for many minority and immigrant populations. Therefore, this limitation could be addressed in the future if findings are found to be applicable to larger populations. By applying the findings to other minority or immigrant populations the limitations to diversity presently found will be eliminated.

The ethical strengths present include that the data collected will be based on the participants' own meaning of the experiences they have had with the integration process. This will facilitate a safe space for participants to share and describe their

personal experiences with integration. Because of the nature of the program, and the cultural nuances of our population, the program is framed within Social Constructionist and Human Ecological Systems theoretical perspectives. Through the Human Ecological lens, FLU adopts the view that environmental conditions do affect the developmental trajectory of each individual. Using the Social Construction lens FLU incorporates the significance of how the stories we learn about ourselves can determine the actions we will take and the notions of our abilities and limitations. FLU incorporates both theories as foundational in identifying the needs and creation of the goals and objectives of FLU's target population. Further, this program will facilitate description of a complex phenomenon specifically the cultural integration of first- generation Hispanic students and their parents. This program has the potential for providing information of this complex process based on real life experiences of its participants.

An ethical limitation that could present itself is that the results can be influenced by the program developer's personal biases and idiosyncrasies. This limitation will be minimized by incorporating the expert opinion of professionals in the field in implementing FLU. This will be used to minimize and filter the program developer's personal biases and idiosyncrasies. Strengths include the credentials of the program developer, e.g. licensed mental health professional, that enrich the mental health component of the program. Further the program addresses the needs of both parents and children as previously cited research demonstrates that the involvement of parents increases likelihood of academic success. Additionally, the program addresses the ways in which the effects of cultural stress on mental health can impact the pursuit of higher

education, a conversion not currently addressed in other college preparation programs, therefore, filling the gap for this need.

The below offers an outline of items that will be addressed in each group session. The outline is organized by themes then weeks under each theme. Sessions that are separate (parents only or teens only) and joint (parents and teens together) are also noted.

Theme: Cultural stress on mental health

Week 1 Teens

- 1.1 Introduce participants to group and provide summary of goals and objectives during the following 12 weeks. (10 min.)
- 1.2 Agree on group rules in order to create a safe space for participants to share stories. (10 min)
- 1.3 Introduce theme: effects of cultural stress on mental health.
- 1.4 Use worksheets and media to review intersection of biculturalism, cultural stress, and mental health. (25 min).
- 1.5 End first session with time for Q&A and reflections. (15 min.)

Week 2 Teens:

- 1.6 Welcome teens back to week 2 of FLU. (10 min)
- 1.7 Introduce teens to concept of braiding cultures through integration approach. (5 min)
- 1.8 Review mental health benefits found in research regarding integration and its impact in reducing cultural stress. (10 min.)
- 1.9 Group discussion on ways to create bicultural identity through integration, identifying fears regarding biculturalism, and reflections on research supporting benefits. (20 min)
- 1.10 Close out group with time for Q&A and reflections. (15min.)

Week 1 Parents

- 1.1 Introduce participants to group and provide summary of goals and objectives during the following 12 weeks. (15 min.)
- 1.2 Agree on group rules in order to create a safe space for participants to share stories. (15 min)
- 1.3 Introduce theme: effects of cultural stress on mental health.
- 1.4 Use worksheets and media to review intersection of biculturalism, cultural stress, and mental health. (15 min).
- 1.5 End first session with time for Q&A and reflections. (15 min.)

Week 2 Parents:

- 1.6 Welcome parents back to week 2 of FLU (10 min)
- 1.7 Continue dialogue regarding biculturalism and cultural stress: focus on mental health challenges identified in research. (15 min)
- 1.8 Group discussion on cultural stress parents have experienced firsthand and observed in their children. (20 min)
- 1.9 Close out group with time for Q&A and reflections. (15 min.)

Figure 2. Weekly Outline

Week 3 Teens:

- 1.1 Welcome teens back to week 3 of FLU and review of past two weeks. (10 min)
- 1.2 Introduce benefits of being bilingual. (5 min)
- 1.3 Review financial benefits of being bilingual. (10 min.)
- 1.4 Group discussion on ways to enhance and practice bilingualism. (20 min)
- 1.5 Close out group with time for Q&A and reflections. (15min.)

Week 3 Parents:

- 1.1 Welcome parents back to week 3 of FLU and review of past two weeks. (10 min)
- 1.2 Introduce parents to concept of braiding cultures through integration approach. (5 min)
- 1.3 Review mental health benefits found in research regarding integration and its impact in reducing cultural stress. (10 min.)
- 1.4 Group discussion on ways to support biculturalism in their children using integration, identifying fears regarding biculturalism, and reflections on research supporting benefits. (20 min)
- 1.5 Close out group with time for Q&A and reflections. (15min.)

Theme 2: Higher education

Week 4 Teens:

- 2.1 Welcome teens back to week four of FLU and introduce topic of higher education (10 min).
- 2.2 Introduce statistical benefits of individuals obtaining a college degree (15 min.)
- 2.3 Group discussion regarding fears and motivation in pursuing higher education (20min.)
- 2.4 Close out group with time for Q&A and reflections. (15min.)

Week 4 Parents:

- 2.1 Welcome parents back to week four of FLU and introduce topic of higher education (10 min).
- 2.2 Introduce statistical benefits of individual obtaining a college degree (15 min.)
- 2.3 Group discussion regarding supporting teens in obtaining higher education degree (20min.)
- 2.4 Close out group with time for Q&A and reflections. (15min.)

Figure 2 (continued). Weekly Outline

Week 5 Teens:

- 2.1 Welcome teens back to week five of FLU and introduce guest speaker to cover road maps to higher education (5 min.)
- 2.2 Review road maps to higher education with focus on requirements, applications, and differences between community college, Cal State universities, UC universities and private institutions (40 min).
- 2.3 Close out with teens creating draft of personal road map to higher education. (15 min)

Week 5 Parents:

- 2.5 Welcome families back to week five of FLU and introduce guest speaker to cover road maps to higher education (5 min.)
- 2.6 Guest speaker to review road maps to higher education with focus on requirements, applications, and differences between community college, Cal State universities, UC universities and private institutions (40 min).
- 2.7 Close out group with time for Q&A (15 min)

Week six – Joint session:

- 2.4 Welcome families back to week six of FLU and introduce guest speaker (10 min.)
- 2.5 Review financial aid including FAFSA, state and Pell grants, loans, in-state tuition and AB540. (60 min.)
- 2.6 Close out group with time for Q&A. (30 min.)

Theme 3: Community Resourcing

Week 7 Teens:

- 3.1 Welcome teens back to week seven of FLU and introduce guest speaker (5min)
- 3.2 Family Resource Center representative to inform teens of community and center resources focusing on mental health, after school programs, and college support programs. (40 min.)
- 3.3 Close out group with time for Q&A (15 min.)

Week 7 – Parents

- 3.1 Welcome families back to week seven of FLU and introduce guest speaker (5min)
- 3.2 Family Resource Center representative to inform families of community and center resources. (40 min.)
- 3.3 Close out group with time for Q&A (15 min.)

Figure 2 (continued). Weekly Outline

Week 8 - Joint:

- 3.1 Welcome families back to week eight of FLU (10min).
- 3.2 Family Resource Center fair (90 min.)

Theme 4: Immigration Information

Week 9 Joint:

- 4.1 Welcome families back to week nine of FLU and introduce guest speaker (5min.)
- 4.2 Guest speaker to review immigration resources for students and parents (60 min.)
- 4.3 Close out group with time for Q&A (30 min.)

Theme 5: Networking

Week 10 Teens:

- 5.1 Welcome teens back to week 10, final week of groups (5 min.)
- 5.2 Review benefits of networking and comradery (5min.)
- 5.3 Initiate social gathering in celebration of group process completion with food, music, and comradery (50min.)

Week 10 Parents:

- 5.1 Welcome parents back to week 10, final week of groups (5 min.)
- 5.2 Review benefits of networking and comradery (5min.)
- 5.3 Initiate social gathering in celebration of group process completion with food, music, and comradery (50min.)

Theme 6 Focused Family Sessions:

Week 11: First Focused Family Session

- 6.1 Review personal experiences with cultural stress.
- 6.2 Celebrate strengths

Week 12: Second Focused Family Session

- 6.3 Program take- aways
- 6.4 Family activity: family creates symbolic art piece that represents how higher education and culture will be celebrated jointly.

Figure 2 (continued). Weekly Outline

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Familias Latinas Unidas (FLU) is a 12-week program that targets the cultural stress experienced by first generation Hispanics (FGH) that interferes with their pursuit of higher education. FLU's target audience is high school students ages 15-18 who identify as Hispanic and who would be the first in their family to attend college. FLU also incorporates parent participation into the program. During the preliminary search of programs already in existence, it was found that limited programs incorporated parent participation, however, research has demonstrated the significance of parent participation in high school students entering college. By incorporating parents into the program, FLU heeds to the evidence found through research that supports the successful completion of the program and enhancing the likelihood of higher education enrollment.

The topics FLU addresses include the development of a bicultural identity with a primary focus on language and culture and its impact on mental health, creating support networks, immigration resources, community linkages, and a heavy focus on the promotion of higher education. During the first 10 weeks, FLU uses psychoeducational processing groups as its service delivery platform. Some weeks, groups will be separated between parents and teens while other weeks both parents and teens will meet together in groups. During the ten weeks of groups, the program facilitator will have guest speakers provide information on community linkages, immigration, and college enrollment. After the first ten weeks of psychoeducational processing groups, FLU ends with two weeks of family group sessions. FLU aims to increase solidarity and comradery for FGH students, to reduce feelings of isolation, support their mental health and increase college

enrollment.

There is a need for the Familias Latinas Unidas program because it seeks to address the cultural stress component that other college preparatory programs have not taken into account as found in the preliminary search of college preparatory programs in the state of California. Further, FLU seeks to work with FGH students and their parents, a specific demographic that generally has a lower family capital, and as it was found, a higher family capital is beneficial when in the pursuit of higher education. Low family capital included low educational expectations and parents who did not attend college (Kanno, & Cromley, 2013). FLU makes FGH the target population in order to mitigate this lower family capital and provide information and resources to fill the gaps for students and their parents. FLU considers the mental health impact that cultural stress has on FGH students and addresses it directly through the program's weekly topics and activities. Further, FLU is a needed program because it seeks to add to the current work being done across the United States to increase the rates of Hispanic students attending college.

In the literature review, parent participation was identified as a necessary component in the academic success of students. Parent support was found to be significantly associated with the engagement students have in their schools (Constante, Marchand, Cross, & Rivas-Drake, 2018). Further, parents of low SES had a greater influence on the academic achievement of their children than parents with a higher SES (Domina, 2005). For Latino students, positive academic outcomes were identified with parent participation regardless of the grade the student was in (Jeynes, 2017). Additionally, cultural factors that hindered parent participation were also reviewed such

as culturally informed notions in the separation of responsibilities that at times was misinterpreted as disengagement (Nicolau, & Ramos, 1990). Additional barriers such as scheduling, childcare, and transportation were also identified. Researchers identified these barriers not as a reflection of their lack of engagement but of the challenges experienced interfering with engagement.

Taking a research-informed approach, FLU incorporates parents into the program in order to maximize the likelihood of program completion and support higher education enrollment. Educational hurdles were also identified as barriers in the pursuit of higher education for FGH. Disparities in academic opportunities offered were identified such as fewer challenging courses offered at schools with higher numbers of Hispanics or minorities (Kohler, & Lazarín, 2007). Disparities in funding were also identified such as school districts with higher numbers of minority students receiving less funding than districts with smaller populations of minority students (Kohler, & Lazarín, 2007). In mitigating educational hurdles, it was found that creating supportive academic environments as well as creating a sense of belonging, nurtured academic resilience in Hispanic students. Using this information, FLU takes a psychoeducational processing approach in the program delivery in order to foster a sense of belonging for its participants.

Language barriers in the pursuit of higher education were also identified in the literature review. The research presented found that limited verbal and written English comprehension in some FGH students was less of a barrier than the low family capital experienced by FGH students. However, the literature demonstrated developing biliteracy in bilingual students, sometimes through dual-immersion programs, maximized their

academic success (Babino, & Stewart, 2017) and Lindholm-Leary, & Block, 2010).

Applying this research into practice, FLU seeks to promote the development of bilingualism with its participants.

Legal barriers were also addressed in the literature review. For undocumented students, it was found that their legal status has a direct effect in their ability to secure financial aid and in the cost of education as many not qualify for in state tuition (Suarez-Orozco, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2015). In mitigating these barriers, the research demonstrated that as of 2015, 20 states have changed their residency requirements allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition (Nienhusser, 2015). Also, as of 2018, 8 states have implemented policies that grant financial aid to undocumented students (Ngo, & Astudillo, 2019). FLU seeks to address these legal barriers by having guest speakers present legal and financial aid information to participants.

Mental health barriers that may interfere with the pursuit of higher education were also identified in the literature review. For undocumented students, the research demonstrated the emotional toll an undocumented status produced such as anxiety, worries, and fears (Cervantes, Minero, & Brito, 2015). Additional research demonstrated how discrimination and history of trauma significantly predicted psychological distress and dysfunction for Hispanic students (Myers, Wyatt, Ullman, Loeb, Chin, Prause, & Liu, 2015). Further, students who experienced discrimination at higher rates also reported higher depressive symptoms than their counterparts (Ward, Feinstein, Vines, Robinson, Haan, & Aiello, 2019). Indirect effects of acculturation stress were also found in the creation of anxiety sensitivity on symptoms of depression, suicide, anxiety, and social anxiety (Jardin, Mayorga, Bakhshaie, Garey, Viana, Sharp, & Zvolensky, 2018).

Given FLU is a mental health program aimed at increasing higher education enrollment, it addresses the mental health effects of cultural stress head on, through the psychoeducational process platform. Given all these barriers presented, the literature also speaks to the strengths found in FGH students. Inherent desires to give back to the community, seeking the betterment of the family, and family support were cited as factors contributing to academic success for Hispanic students (Falicov, 2014). Further, undocumented students attributed their academic success to a supportive network made up of family and friends, and internal desires to advocate for the advancement of their communities (Perez., et al, 2009). FGH students also cited supportive school personnel, internal motivation and responsibility as drivers of their academic success (Vega, 2016). FLU honors these strengths by acknowledging the challenges experienced while also providing a route for academic success.

FLU is 12-week program for first generation Hispanic students ages 15-18 and their parents. First generation Hispanic student is defined as a student whose parents have not attended college, and who are classified as first generation in the United States. FLU will offer 10 weeks of psychoeducational processing groups making use of both joint and separate sessions between teens and parents. Groups will be once a week for 60 to 100 minutes depending on whether the group is joint or separate. After 10 weeks of groups, each family will receive two weeks of focused-family sessions in order to facilitate dialogue between parents and teens regarding the topics explored during the group sessions. For the first through the third week the theme will be Cultural Stress on Mental Health; for the fourth through sixth week, the theme will be Higher Education; for the seventh through the eighth week, the theme will be Community Resourcing; for the ninth

week, the theme will be Immigration Information, for the tenth week, the theme will be Networking, and for the final two weeks the theme will be the focused-family sessions. Additionally, food will be provided free of cost during each week of the program.

FLU has six goals it seeks to accomplish during the 12-week program. The first goal of FLU is to increase awareness in both teens and parents of culture, language, and the impacts of mental health as it relates to a bicultural identity. Secondly, FLU seeks to increase the percentage of parents and teens who view higher education as important measured by posttest. Third, FLU will work to establish linkages between families and community resources. Fourth, FLU has the goal of increasing the knowledge of community immigration resources available to participants. Fifth, FLU seeks to establish support networks amongst program participants. Last, FLU aims to increase dialogue between parents and teens regarding cultural stress, strengths and higher education.

With these six goals in mind, FLU will work to address the mental health of FGH students, decrease cultural stress, decrease isolation, create supportive networks, increase knowledge of community and legal resources found in community, and increase the achievement of higher education for FGH students. Through the 12 weeks of the program, FLU seeks to mitigate educational, cultural, linguistic, and emotional barriers, that research has demonstrated exists for FGH students in their pursuit of higher education in order to increase the college enrollment of FGH students. Through the group format families and students will be able to create solidarity and networks to decrease the isolating experience research has shown FGH students can have. This program is of relevance given that the Hispanic population is one of the lowest ethnic groups who receives mental health services (Méndez, & Cole, 2014). The group format has been

found to be the least threatening form of mental health, which may serve as an ideal introduction to mental health services for FLU's target population. FLU is place where culture and the integration of bicultural identities will be celebrated, and higher education fostered.

FLU was reviewed by experts in the field in order to obtain opinions on the effectiveness, value, and contribution of the program in mitigating cultural stress as a barrier to higher education for FGH students. The expert readers included an academic in the field of mental health who also serves as a director of mental health programs that services the Hispanic population, and a school district board member. All experts reside and work in Southern California – FLU's primary target area. The field experts were provided a copy of the program manual and were asked to consider the need for program, any benefit to population, possible program effectiveness, and elements to be added in strengthening the program. These expert opinions were then assessed for common themes, differences, and distinctive recommendations to modify and enhance services.

The expert readers agreed that further information about how life would be different with a college degree should be expanded upon. Further, when addressing the bicultural identity, expert readers agreed that providing additional information regarding the consequences of having an underdeveloped bicultural identity would support the need to create and strengthen a bicultural identity.

In the execution of the program, one expert reader suggested that in week one, rather than making use of worksheets, it would be more valuable for participants to grow rapport and connectedness in both the teen and parent cohorts so that a strong relational foundation could be established at onset. It was also suggested that art be used in week

three in addressing the concepts of braiding and integration of the bicultural identity as this may be a more therapeutic way of addressing the issue. For week four, the suggestion was made to incorporate video testimonials of college students who did not think they would attend college and the benefits experienced as a result of attending. The argument was made that videos may be more compelling for the teenage population than presenting them with statistics. It was also suggested to have four family sessions rather than two as families may benefit more from family sessions than community resources. Last, when it comes to immigration information, an expert reader suggested breakouts depending on immigration need i.e., those who do not have immigration concerns and those that do.

Distinctive recommendations included: making use of district-wide parent text messaging as part of the recruitment for the participants. Further, it was suggested to use the acronym “F.L.U.” rather than “FLU” to avoid confusion with the illness. The formatting of the manual to a chart or table making it more user-friendly was also recommended. The final recommendation that stood out was to provide 5-item talking point worksheets in facilitating discussions every week.

As a result of obtaining the above recommendations, the following modifications will be implemented: in week one the focus will shift to developing a strong foundational connection amongst participants as these connections will facilitate meeting FLU’s goal of building supportive and networking systems amongst participants. Further, art will be incorporated into week three during the focus on bicultural integration in order to facilitate nonthreatening dialogue and foster creativity while each teenager creates their own unique identity. Additionally, testimonials of FGH students attending college will be incorporated however, testimonials will be provided in person rather than through video.

FLU will incorporate the use of district-wide parent text messaging during the recruitment of participants and make use of the acronym “F.L.U.” when identifying the program.

Expert readers agreed on the benefit FLU will have on the target audience, first generation Hispanic students and their parents. Readers agreed with the literature and added that FLU would address and empower students in building family support, encouraging self-confidence and creating a pathway for success. FLU was also described as “timely, well-designed, and easily implemented”. The feedback collected demonstrates ways that the program can be enhanced, and program delivery clarified.

Limitations found in FLU are inherent with the target population, restricting work only with FGH students. However, across minorities, first generation students can be found. This limitation can be address with future findings indicating FLU’s application to other ethnic minorities. Further, an ethical limitation that can arise in the interpretation of FLU’s outcome are the developer’s personal biases and idiosyncrasies. In order to limit this bias, the developer will make use of expert readers in the interpretation of the results.

Strengths found in FLU include research in support of cross-sectional work specifically of mental health, education, and culture. FLU supports the existing body of work that examines mental health and education for FGH students, and provides a tool to offer services to an underserved population. FLU capitalizes on the soft delivery approach found through group therapy in order to engage a community that has long been avoidant of mental health support. This introductory approach can be the catalyst for participants seeking further mental support. Given the dual educational and therapeutic components of the program, FLU can serve as a resource for both mental health

professionals and educators. FLU integrates mental health, culture, and higher education, paving the way for future work and application for this threefold approach. FLU is a unique program of its kind addressing this threefold need not currently addressed by other programs. Further, FLU contributes to the existing body of research that identifies a need for educational equity by providing a practical tool in mitigating this gap.

Additional strengths found in FLU include addressing the issue of diversity. By working with FGH students and their families, FLU makes room for work to be done with a minority population. FLU creates a safe space where a minority population can address the sensitive topic of cultural stress and integration. FLU also has the potential of providing empirical data on the integration of cultures when a systemic approach is taken. The systemic approach taken by incorporating the parents into the program, is an additional strength of FLU supported by existing literature. Further, FLU is developed by a licensed mental health professional, a benefit for the mental health component found in FLU.

Implications for the DMFT field include expanding knowledge for the needs of first-generation Hispanic students. This information can be used to expand program creation that further mitigates barriers identified in this body of work. Further, the field benefits from this needs assessment as it can be used to inform further interventions created in support of the Hispanic population. Further, this needs assessment benefits the field, as it demonstrates how targeted interventions can be applied to a specific need and population that is informed by the current literature.

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APPENDIX A
DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS

Differential Effects Questions

Are there any current polices or laws affecting your decision to pursue higher education?

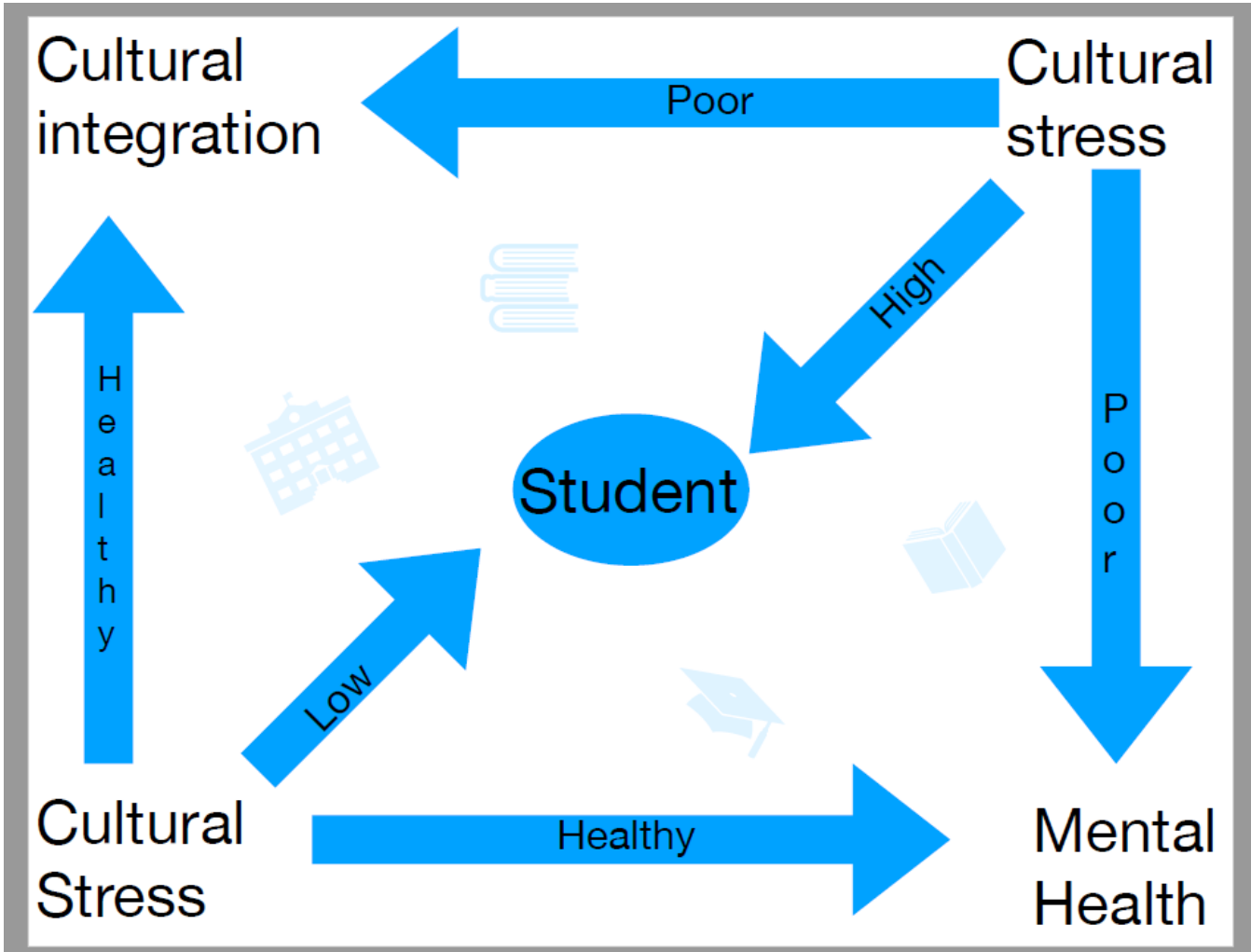
Are there presently any community-wide health epidemics?

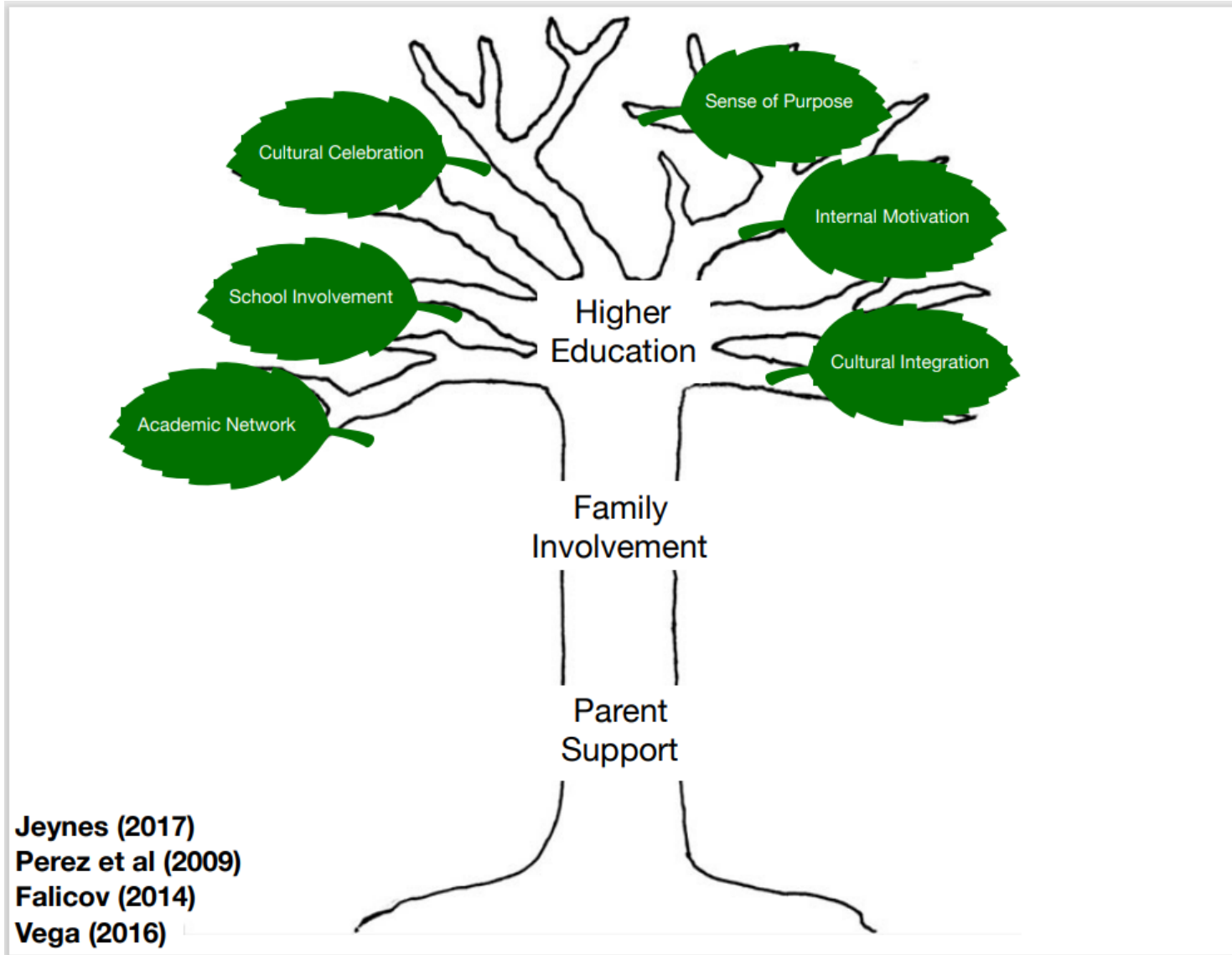
Are there present political issues affecting you?

Are there present climate disasters?

Are there present financial crises?

APPENDIX B
WORKSHEETS







Jardin et al (2018)
Ward et al (2019)
Myers et al (2015)

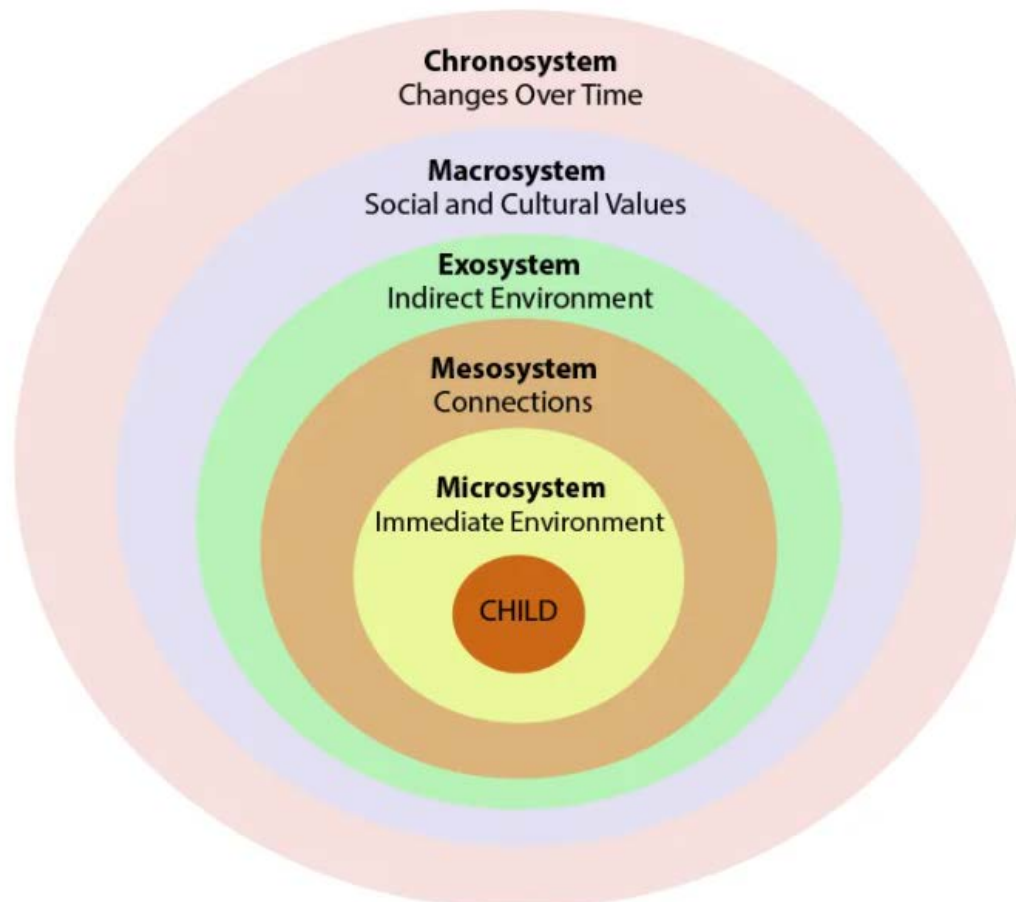
Feeling "Other"
Poor Information
Language Barrier
Cultural Isolation
Depression
Worry
Anxiety
Discrimination
Fear
Frustration
Social Anxiety
Low Self Esteem

Higher Education

APPENDIX C

BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



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APPENDIX D
SCREENING SURVEY

**Familias
Latinas
Unidas**

Screening Survey

Will you be the first to attend college
in your family? Yes No

Were you or your parents born in Latin
America? Yes No

Are you between the age of 15-18?
Yes No



**Familias
Latinas
Unidas**

Screening Survey

Will you be the first to attend college
in your family? Yes No

Were you or your parents born in Latin
America? Yes No

Are you between the age of 15-18?
Yes No



APPENDIX E

SPANISH INFORMATIONAL FLYER

Familias Latinas Unidas

Meta: aumentar la matriculación universitaria para estudiantes hispanos de primera generación

Si es un(a) padre/madre con un adolescente entre los 15-18 años que será primer generación en atender el colegio, este programa es para usted y su adolescente!



Lugar
High school local



Hora
7pm - 9pm



Cena gratuita
cada sesión

Programa de 12 semanas que abordará los siguientes temas

- ESTRÉS CULTURAL EN LA SALUD MENTAL
- EDUCACIÓN MÁS ALTA
- RECURSOS COMUNITARIOS
- INFORMACIÓN INMIGRATORIA
- COMPAÑERISMO
- SESIONES ENFOCADAS EN LA FAMILIA

APPENDIX F

ENGLISH INFORMATIONAL FLYER

Familias Latinas Unidas

Goal: Increase college enrollment for First Generation Hispanic students

If you are a First Generation High School student between the ages of 15-18, and are considering enrolling in higher education, this program is for you and your parents!



Location

Local High school



Time

7pm - 9pm



Dinner provided every week

12 Week Program That Will Address The Following Themes

**CULTURAL
STRESS ON
MENTAL
HEALTH**

**HIGHER
EDUCATION**

Guest speaker
from financial
aid department

**COMMUNITY
RESOURCING**

Family
Resource
Center Fair

**IMMIGRATION
INFORMATION**

legal advocate
will present
information

NETWORKING

FOCUSED

Family Sessions