

the role of positive psychology, cultural, and family factors in latina/o college students' vocational outcome expectations

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Latina/o college students ($N = 120$) provided their perceptions of positive psychology, cultural, family, and vocational outcome expectations. Presence of meaning in life, hope, Anglo orientation, and Mexican orientation were significant predictors of subjective happiness. Implications for counselors are provided.

Keywords: Latina/o college students, vocational outcome expectations, Hispanic-serving institutions, meaning in life, acculturation



The Latina/o population is one of the fastest growing groups in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In the current study, we use *Latina/o* to describe individuals with Mexican heritage (Chang et al., 2016; Von Robertson, Bravo, & Chaney, 2016). Despite the growing Latina/o population, Latina/o students continue to have low academic achievement and high dropout rates (American Council on Education, 2012). Additionally, the achievement gap is well documented between Latina/o students and their non-Latina/o peers in high school completion rates, grades, and test scores (American Council on Education, 2012). As a result, Latina/o students are underrepresented at colleges and universities. According to the Pew Research Center (2016), 15% of Latinas/os between the ages of 25 and 29 years had received a college degree compared with 40% of White adults. Latina/o students also continue to be ranked low on college readiness compared with their White counterparts (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Although college and career services have improved for the growing Latina/o population, Latina/o students pursue career selection with individual, interpersonal, and institutional challenges (Vela, Lu, Veliz, Johnson, & Castro, 2014). Given that the aforementioned challenges and statistics influence vocational outcome expectations, investigating predictors of this important factor among Latina/o students is a worthwhile research endeavor.



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In the current study, we use a conceptual framework that consists of theoretically and empirically related positive psychology, cultural, and family factors. The rationale for this conceptual framework was to determine which factors are associated with Latina/o students' vocational outcome expectations. First, we provide a literature review with positive psychology, cultural, and family factors. Next, we present quantitative findings from 120 Latina/o college students from a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI; i.e., a school at which at least 25% of students identify as Latina/o). Finally, we provide a discussion regarding the importance of these findings as well as implications for practice and research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In an attempt to move the field toward greater understanding of Latina/o students' career development, we use a positive psychology, family, and cultural framework to understand predictors of vocational outcome expectations. A positive psychology framework is suitable for addressing Latina/o students' career development given its emphasis on strengths, flourishing, and positive development (Seligman, 2002). Positive psychology, which refers to the study of positive human functioning (Seligman, 2002), focuses on individual strengths that help individuals overcome hardships and allows researchers to understand factors that contribute to academic achievement, well-being, career development, and resilience (Seligman, 2002; Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Other focal points of positive psychology are (a) how to come to terms with the past (e.g., gratitude), (b) how to develop positive emotions about the present (e.g., meaning in life), and (c) how to develop optimism about the future (e.g., hope; Seligman, 2002). In addition to positive psychology, cultural and family factors are important to understand Latina/o students' career development. Therefore, we attempt to extend research with Latinas/os by focusing on how positive psychology, culture, and family influence vocational outcome expectations.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY FACTORS

Using a positive psychology framework, we selected factors regarding positive emotions about the past, present, and future. Gratitude involves "an appreciation of the psychological and social resources that are available in one's life" (Kleiman, Adams, Kashdan, & Riskind, 2013, p. 540). Kleiman et al. (2013) attributed gratitude as mindful appreciation that arises from kindness with other people. Researchers found that gratitude is positively related to prosocial behaviors, social adjustment (Froh et al., 2014), and life satisfaction (Vela, Sparrow, Ikonopoulou, Gonzalez, & Rodriguez, 2017), as well as negatively related to suicidal ideation (Li, Zhang, Li, & Ye, 2012). Ma, Kibler, and Sly (2013) further indicated that moral affect gratitude has a positive correlation with protective factors and life-orientation gratitude is negatively associated with risk factors. In addition, Froh et al. (2014) posited that experiencing and expressing gratitude comprise a simple way to counter negative appraisals and increase school bonding and social adjustment, strengthen supportive relationships, increase prosocial behavior, and enhance meaning in life. On the basis of previous

research, students who have greater levels of gratitude and appreciation of past events might also have higher levels of presence of meaning in life.

Presence of meaning in life refers to current attribution of meaning in one's life (Steger & Shin, 2010). According to Heintzelman and King (2016), people are surrounded by evidence of the presence of meaning in life. Storytelling serves to make sense of experiences, and life philosophies provide a framework of values and goals that give life a sense of purpose. Researchers found that meaning in life is related to students' well-being (Dogra, Basu, & Das, 2011), life satisfaction (Park, Park, & Peterson, 2010), and hope (Vela, Lerma, et al., 2014). Finally, hope is a future-oriented attitude that helps individuals manage crisis situations by projecting positive thoughts toward the future (Luo, Wang, Wang, & Cai, 2016). According to Sears and Kraus (2009), hope provides a sense of goal-directed determination and ability to generate plans to achieve goals. Researchers found that hope is related to high school and college students' psychological grit (Vela, Lu, Lenz, & Hinojosa, 2015), meaning in life (Vela, Lerma, et al., 2014), academic performance (Snyder et al., 2002), and mental health (Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011). Finally, Larsen and Stege (2012) posited that hope is related to psychological and physical health, academic performance, and positive life outcomes.

In summary, gratitude, meaning in life, and hope have been theoretically and empirically linked in previous studies in positive psychology (e.g., Vela, Lu, et al., 2015). From a positive psychology perspective, students who have high levels of gratitude and appreciation for their past might also have higher levels of meaning in life as well as hope for their future. These positive psychology variables can play an important role in Latina/o students' career development (Vela, Lenz, Sparrow, & Gonzalez, 2015). In addition to these positive psychology factors, including family and culture in a conceptual framework with Latina/o students is important given its potential influence on career development.

FAMILY AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Marin and Marin (1991) defined *familismo* as strong feelings of loyalty and solidarity to the nuclear and extended family unit. Family connectedness, including perceptions of family identity, family mutual activities, and family cohesion, are important factors of familismo (Jose, Ryan, & Pryor, 2012; Vela, Lu, et al., 2015). Several researchers have explored the role of family among Latino students. Vela, Lenz, et al. (2015) examined contributions to career development in Latina/o adolescents by exploring the relationship among positive psychology and humanistic factors in a multidimensional manner. Researchers surveyed 131 Latina/o adolescents to examine their perceptions of presence of meaning in life, search for meaning in life, hope, family importance, subjective happiness, and vocational outcome expectations. Important predictors of vocational outcome expectations were perceptions of meaning in life and family importance. Other researchers found that family importance is related to high school and college students' academic resilience, hope, meaning in life, career development, and academic performance (e.g., Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Cavazos et al., 2010; Vela, Castro, Cavazos, Cavazos, & Gonzalez, 2015). Although some Latina/o parents may not have postsecondary education, they can teach their



children about hard work, sacrifice, and psychological grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). These contributions from parents can enhance Latina/o adolescents' positive vocational outcome expectations and long-term goals.

In addition to family importance, acculturation and enculturation have the potential to play important roles in career development for Latina/o college students. Although acculturation has been considered a linear process, researchers and educators have also looked at acculturation from a bidimensional perspective to understand that people relate to and interact with multiple cultures in different ways (Berry, 1980; Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995). *Acculturation* can be defined as the degree to which individuals adhere to the dominant Anglo culture, whereas *enculturation* refers to the degree to which individuals adhere to their Latina/o heritage culture (Aguayo, Herman, Ojeda, & Flores, 2011). Although some researchers found that acculturation to the Anglo culture related to Hispanic women's career self-efficacy (Rivera, Chen, Flores, Blumberg, & Ponterotto, 2007), Latina/o girls' career decision self-efficacy (Ojeda, Piña-Watson, et al., 2011), and Mexican American students' academic goals (Flores, Ojeda, Huang, Gee, & Lee, 2006), other researchers highlighted benefits of enculturation to the Mexican culture, such as enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) coursework (Vela, Zamarripa, Balkin, Johnson, & Smith, 2014). Ojeda, Castillo, Meza, and Piña-Watson (2013) examined how acculturation, enculturation, White marginalization, and Mexican American marginalization influenced college persistence intentions and life satisfaction among Mexican American college students. One important finding was that acculturation and enculturation were related to students' persistence.

In summary, researchers have found theoretical and empirical relationships among positive psychology, cultural, and family factors. Acculturation was related to Hispanic girls' career decision self-efficacy (Ojeda, Piña-Watson, et al., 2011), enculturation was related to Mexican Americans' life satisfaction (Ojeda, Edwards, Hardin, & Piña-Watson, 2014), and meaning in life and family importance were related to Mexican American high school students' vocational outcome expectations (Vela, Lenz, et al., 2015). However, these variables have been examined separately in previous studies; researchers have not included these factors in a single model to determine which factors have the strongest predictive relationship on Latina/o students' vocational outcome expectations.

VOCATIONAL OUTCOME EXPECTATIONS

One of the most important factors in career development is *vocational outcome expectations* (Yeh & Borrero, 2012), which refer to beliefs regarding consequences of actions related to career development (Bandura, 1997) and outcomes of career choices (McWhirter, Rasheed, & Crothers, 2000). One relevant theory to understand and contextualize outcome expectations is social cognitive career theory, which refers to the ways that personal and contextual factors influence career interests (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Vocational outcome expectations refer to several potential outcomes, such as income, career satisfaction, and employment (McWhirter, Ramos, & Medina, 2013). Examples of vocational outcome expectations for Latina/o students include finding employment to provide and take care of family. This concept of hopeful and positive outcomes for the future is also related to positive youth development, career decisions, and behaviors (e.g., Ali,

McWhirter, & Chronister, 2005; Schmid, Phelps, & Lerner, 2011). Family status, family support (Metheny & McWhirter, 2013), academic motivation (Domene, Socholotiuk, & Weitowicz, 2011), and internal locus of control (Isik, 2013) influence students' vocational outcome expectations. Although researchers examined the relationship among various factors on vocational outcome expectations, less attention has been given to the role of positive psychology and cultural influences, particularly among Latina/o college students.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Gaining an understanding of how positive psychology, culture, and family influence Latina/o students' vocational outcome expectations is an important issue in postsecondary education (Piña-Watson, Jimenez, & Ojeda, 2014). Although some researchers investigated Latina/o college students' career development, no study used a positive psychology, cultural, and family framework to understand the factors that affect their vocational outcome expectations. There is a dearth of information investigating how positive psychology factors interact with family and culture within the Latina/o community. Using positive psychology, cultural, and family factors in a single model is important given previous research pointing to separate relationships on Latina/o students' career development (e.g., Ojeda, Piña-Watson, et al., 2011; Vela, Lenz, et al., 2015). On the basis of previous research, when Latina/o students have both hope that they can create a positive future and a sense of meaning in life, their level of expectations for their future career may increase. There also might be values or beliefs in the Latina/o and/or Anglo culture that contribute to positive and hopeful vocational outcome expectations. The lack of literature in this area underscores the importance of exploring how specific factors impact career development. Research is necessary to determine which positive psychology, cultural, and family factors influence vocational outcome expectations. Therefore, we explored the following research question: To what extent do positive psychology, cultural, and family factors influence Latina/o college students' vocational outcome expectations?

METHOD

Participants

In the current study, we used criterion sampling to recruit participants. The lead researcher (first author) identified large undergraduate courses from which Latina/o participants could be recruited, and 120 students who were enrolled at an HSI provided data. The HSI has an enrollment of approximately 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students (approximately 90% of students are of Mexican decent). Participants' age ranged from 18 to 54 years ($M = 21.69$, $SD = 4.94$). This sample included 79 women (65%) and 41 men (32%) who self-identified as Latina/o, Mexican, or Latina/o ethnic identities. Similar to other researchers (e.g., Cavazos et al., 2010; Vela, Lu, et al., 2015), we use *Latina/o* to refer to individuals who have Mexican heritage (Chang et al., 2016; Von Robertson et al., 2016). Finally, most participants were classified as freshmen or sophomores.

Measures

All participants received a survey packet that included a demographic form, the Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002), the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006), the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), the Pan-Hispanic Familism Scale (Villarreal, Blozis, & Widaman, 2005), the Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans–II (Bauman, 2005), the Vocational Outcome Expectations Questionnaire (VOE; McWhirter et al., 2000), and information regarding institutional review board approval. We selected the aforementioned instruments to measure relevant constructs given the evidence of reliability and validity in previous studies. The demographic form focused on participants' age, ethnic background, gender, grade point average, academic aspirations, and generation status.

Gratitude. The Gratitude Questionnaire (McCullough et al., 2002) measures participants' tendency to feel gratitude. Participants responded to items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include "I have so much in life to be thankful for" and "I am grateful to a wide variety of people." Reliability coefficients range from .83 to .88 (Kleiman et al., 2013; Li et al., 2012). For this study, Cronbach's alpha was .86.

Meaning in life. The MLQ (Steger et al., 2006) is a self-report inventory designed to measure students' or adults' search for and presence of meaning in life. Participants responded to statements evaluated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*absolutely untrue*) to 7 (*absolutely true*). We used the Presence of Meaning in Life subscale in the current study. A sample item for this subscale is "I understand my life's meaning." Possible scores range from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating greater perceptions of presence of meaning in life. Reliability coefficients range from .70 to .93 (Dunn & O'Brien, 2009; Park et al., 2010; Vela, Lerma, et al., 2014). For the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .83.

Hope. The Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) measures participants' attitudes toward goals and objectives. Participants responded to eight statements that were evaluated on an 8-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*definitely false*) to 8 (*definitely true*). A sample response item is "I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me." Possible scores range from 8 to 64, with higher scores representative of higher levels of hope. Reliability coefficients range from .81 to .85 (Vela, Lu, et al., 2015; Visser, Loess, Jeglic, & Hirsch, 2012). For the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .84.

Family importance. The Pan-Hispanic Familism Scale (Villarreal et al., 2005) measures perceptions of family importance. Participants responded to statements evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample response items include "I am proud of my family" and "I cherish the time I spend with my family." Reliability coefficients range from .83 to .87 (Piña-Watson, Ojeda, Castellon, & Dornhecker, 2013; Vela, Lu, et al., 2015). For this study, Cronbach's alpha was .93.

Acculturation and enculturation. The Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans–II (Bauman, 2005) measures participants' orientation to the

Anglo culture and orientation to the Mexican culture. Participants responded to statements evaluated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 5 (*almost always*), with six items measuring Anglo orientation and six items measuring Mexican orientation. Higher scores on the Anglo Orientation subscale (AOS) indicate higher acculturation to the White culture, whereas higher scores on the Mexican Orientation subscale (MOS) represent higher enculturation to the Mexican culture. Reliability estimates range from .73 to .79 on the AOS and .91 on the MOS (Bauman, 2005; Castillo, Lopez-Arenas, & Saldivar, 2010). For the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .63 for the AOS and .93 for the MOS.

Vocational outcome expectations. The VOE (McWhirter et al., 2000) measures participants' perceptions of their ability to accomplish career aspirations. Sample items include "My career planning will lead to a satisfying career for me" and "I have control over my career decisions." Reliability estimates range from .81 to .84 (Fiebig, Braid, Ross, Tom, & Prinzo, 2010; Mah & Yeh, 2010). For the current study, Cronbach's alpha was .96.

Procedure

First, we obtained permission from the institutional review board at an HSI in the southern region of the United States. Second, the lead researcher contacted professors from introduction to psychology courses to request participation. Data collection spanned 4 days from two introduction to psychology courses as well as two educational psychology courses. Third, we informed participants that participation was voluntary and anonymous and that participation would not affect their grade or affiliation with the university. We also informed students that extra credit or any other incentive was not available for their participation. We then obtained consent from all participants in the current study. Questionnaires took approximately 10 to 16 minutes to complete and were done during class instruction time. Finally, scores from all data were compiled and entered into SPSS (Version 23; Vela, Lu, et al., 2015).

Data Analysis

Preliminary analysis. Multicollinearity among predictor variables was evaluated by inspecting bivariate correlations and variance inflation factors (Stevens, 2002). See Table 1. Acceptable variance inflation factors emerging from our analysis suggested that predictive modeling with these variables was appropriate (Vela, Lu, et al., 2015). Before conducting the regression analysis, we performed *t* tests to determine whether any significant differences existed between male and female participants across predictor variables. A *t* test is an appropriate statistical procedure for determining differences between two groups on one dependent variable. Given that we did not find statistically significant differences between men and women, we did not include gender in regression models.

Primary analysis. We modeled relationships between predictor and criterion variables using a simultaneous multiple regression model, which is the appropriate

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations
Among Predictor Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Hope	50.13	7.75	—	.65	.38	.41	.08	.42
2. MLQ	21.78	4.91		—	.41	.13	.05	.29
3. Gratitude	36.15	5.51			—	.00	.05	.60
4. AOS	4.15	0.55				—		-.20
5. MOS	3.22	1.21					—	.01
6. Family	4.44	0.67						—

Note. Hope = Hope Scale; MLQ = Meaning in Life Questionnaire; Gratitude = Gratitude Questionnaire; AOS = Anglo Orientation subscale of the Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans–II; MOS = Mexican Orientation subscale of the Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans–II; Family = Pan-Hispanic Familism Scale.

statistical analysis when researchers predict a continuous variable based on other predictor variables (Dimitrov, 2013). We used multiple regression to evaluate our research question related to the degree that positive psychology, cultural, and family factors predicted vocational outcome expectations. We also evaluated regression coefficients estimating practical significance.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, including Pearson's *r* correlation coefficients, are included in Table 1. We used an alpha level of .05 for the current study. Results showed that hope had a strong correlation with meaning in life ($r = .65, p < .01$), suggesting that students with more hope had higher perceptions of meaning in life. Hope was also positively correlated with gratitude ($r = .38, p < .01$) and family ($r = .41, p < .01$), suggesting that students with higher levels of hope had higher levels of gratitude and family importance. Gratitude was also strongly correlated with family importance ($r = .60, p < .01$), suggesting that students with more gratitude had higher levels of family importance. In addition to examining correlation coefficients, we used multiple regression to analyze vocational outcome expectations based on gratitude, presence of meaning in life, hope, family importance, orientation to the Anglo culture, and orientation to the Mexican culture. There was a statistically significant relationship between predictor variables and vocational outcome expectations, $F(6, 114) = 22.00, p < .001$, thus providing evidence that the variance in vocational outcome expectations accounted for by predictor variables does not equal zero for the population (Dimitrov, 2013). A large effect size of $R^2 = .54$ was noted, indicating that 54% of Latina/o college students' differences in vocational outcome expectations were accounted for by their differences in predictor variables in the current study.

After establishing the overall statistical significance of R^2 and the multiple regression equation, we examined the statistical significance of the regression coefficients for significant predictors (Dimitrov, 2013). Presence of meaning in life, hope, family importance, orientation to the Mexican culture, and orientation to the Anglo cul-

ture had unique contributions to the explanation of variance in vocational outcome expectations. Presence of meaning in life was a statistically significant predictor of vocational outcome expectations (see Table 2), uniquely accounting for 0.4% of the variance. Hope was also a statistically significant predictor of vocational outcome expectations, uniquely accounting for 2% of the variance. Family importance also was a statistically significant predictor of vocational outcome expectations, uniquely accounting for 3% of the variance. Orientation to the Anglo culture and orientation to the Mexican culture also predicted vocational outcome expectations, uniquely accounting for 7% and 3% of the variance, respectively. Finally, gratitude was not a statistically significant predictor of vocational outcome expectations.

DISCUSSION

The current study contributes to the understanding of career development in Latina/o college students by exploring the relationship among positive psychology, culture, and family in a multidimensional manner. Our findings suggest that Latina/o college students had higher vocational outcome expectations when they had greater levels of meaning in life, hope, family importance, acculturation to the Anglo culture, and enculturation to the Mexican culture. Perhaps the most important finding was that the predictive model accounted for 54% of the variance in Latina/o students’ vocational outcome expectations. Researchers have used other models (e.g., ecological, positive psychology) to understand Latina/o students’ academic and career development outcomes and have explained 20%–30% of the variance. Findings from the current study suggest that career counselors should simultaneously address individual, interpersonal, and cultural factors when addressing Latina/o students’ career development.

Perceived presence of meaning in life was a predictor of vocational outcome expectations. This suggests that Latina/o college students have more positive vocational outcome expectations when they perceive higher levels of meaning in life. This is

TABLE 2

Multiple Regression Results for Vocational Outcome Expectations

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>sr</i> ²
Hope	0.12	.06	.19	2.19	.03	.02
MLQ	0.29	.09	.20	3.32	.00	.004
Gratitude	0.11	.07	.12	1.47	.14	.008
Family	1.45	.60	.20	2.40	.02	.03
AOS	2.45	.58	.28	4.29	.00	.07
MOS	0.65	.26	.16	2.50	.01	.03

Note. Hope = Hope Scale; MLQ = Meaning in Life Questionnaire; Gratitude = Gratitude Questionnaire; Family = Pan-Hispanic Familism Scale; AOS = Anglo Orientation subscale of the Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans–II; MOS = Mexican Orientation subscale of the Brief Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans–II.



consistent with previous findings that showed a relationship between meaning in life and subjective happiness, career development, life satisfaction, and psychological grit. A sense of family importance and strong family bonds might have contributed to students' perceptions of meaning in life regarding future outcome expectations. Additionally, perceptions of hope was another predictor of vocational outcome expectations, providing evidence of the importance of attitudes toward goals and objectives related to vocational outcome expectations. This is consistent with previous findings that highlighted a connection between hope and psychological grit, goal attainment (Feldman, Rand, & Kahle-Wroblewski, 2009), mental health, academic achievement (Marques et al., 2011), and positive psychological functioning (Vela, Lu, et al., 2015). Hope refers to individuals' beliefs to pursue desired objectives (Feldman & Dreher, 2012) as well as confidence to make progress toward those goals (Snyder, Michael, & Cheavens, 1999). When Latina/o students have hope that they can create a positive future as well as a sense of meaning in life, their level of expectations toward their future career might increase.

Family importance was related to vocational outcome expectations, which is similar to previous findings that pointed to the importance of familismo on Latino male day laborers' life satisfaction (Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2013) and Latina/o college students' academic persistence (Ojeda, Flores, & Navarro, 2011). Latina/o college students might have hopeful and positive future outcome expectations when they perceive stronger levels of family bonds. Finally, findings suggest the importance of orientation to the Mexican culture and acculturation to the Anglo culture for Latina/o students' vocational outcome expectations. Although researchers identified the importance of acculturation to the Anglo culture on academic and career outcomes, findings from the current study and recent studies have found that cultural identity as evidenced by enculturation to the Mexican culture or adherence to Latino values is related to Latina/o students' enrollment in AP coursework (Vela, Zamarripa, et al., 2014), Latino men's well-being (Ojeda, Piña-Watson, & Gonzalez, 2016), and Latina/o college students' life satisfaction (Navarro, Schwartz, Ojeda, & Piña-Watson, 2014). There might be values or beliefs in the Latina/o culture that contribute to positive and hopeful vocational outcome expectations.

Implications for Practice

On the basis of findings from the current study, there are implications for career counselors to work with Latina/o students. Latina/o students experience multiple career barriers, such as limited resources, lack of career information, low expectations, and minimal support (Vela, Lu, et al., 2014). To combat barriers that these students face and increase their vocational outcome expectations, career counselors should use interventions that increase Latina/o students' meaning in life, hope, family importance, orientation to the Anglo culture, and orientation to the Mexican culture. Counselors could facilitate small-group sessions to discuss information about different careers (e.g., expected pay, job outlook) as well as the importance

of biculturalism and family importance. Given that students might not be aware of how contextual factors (e.g., acculturation) interact with self-identity to influence career development (Niles & Harris-Bowlsby, 2012), counselors may foster active discussions during which each student is encouraged to respond to the following prompts: “Name at least one thing your parents or family members have done to help you in your career development. How has your level of acculturation influenced your career development?” Career counselors could introduce and discuss Ferdman and Gallegos’s (2001) Latino identity model to help Latina/o students understand their level of orientation (e.g., Latino integrated, White identified). Counselors should encourage Latina/o students to reflect and think about how their family and cultural identity influence their outcome expectations.

In addition to discussing level of acculturation and family importance, interventions must strive to increase students’ meaning in life and hope. Given that vocational outcome expectations can be achieved by promoting vicarious learning, psychoeducational sessions could include presenters who are of the same ethnicity discussing challenges as well as cultural issues related to career development. Ideally, these speakers should discuss the importance and strengths of enculturation to the Mexican culture as well as acculturation to the Anglo culture (i.e., bicultural identity) in order to provide students with hope for their future. Guest presenters could talk about how their career and jobs provide meaning as well as hope for their future. Finally, career practitioners can use narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990), career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), solution-focused therapy, and positive psychology (Seligman, 2002) to help Latina/o students make meaning of their experiences in order to develop positive and hopeful outcome expectations.

Implications for Research

More outcome-based research is needed to determine which interventions improve Latina/o students’ meaning in life, hope, enculturation, and acculturation. There are several possible interventions, including narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990), positive psychology (Seligman, 2002), solution-focused therapy, or creative journal arts therapy. Second, researchers can use frameworks to explore how other individual, interpersonal, and institutional factors impact Latina/o students’ career development. Researchers can use structural equation modeling to examine mediating and moderating relationships among the aforementioned factors on Latina/o students’ career development. For example, researchers could determine whether family importance mediates or moderates the relationship between meaning in life and vocational outcome expectations. Using structural equation modeling would allow researchers to examine causal relations among multiple factors on vocational outcome expectations (Dimitrov, 2013). Additionally, looking at career development outcomes among Latinas/os in nonuniversity settings (e.g., community colleges, technical schools, workplaces) is important. Researchers also need to validate positive psychology instruments with Latina/o populations. Finally, researchers should consider using qualitative methods to discover how specific factors influence



vocational outcome expectations. In-depth interviews with Latina/o students would provide incredible insight regarding how meaning in life, hope, family importance, and acculturation influence career development.

Limitations

First, we relied on cross-sectional data, which limit cause-and-effect inferences (Vela, Lu, et al., 2015). Second, we relied on students' self-report perceptions of positive psychology, cultural, and family factors. We agree that some students may lack insight into their experiences and perceptions or may provide socially desirable responses (Alvarado & Ricard, 2013; Vela, Lu, et al., 2015; Zalaquett, 2006). Third, the homogeneity and university environment might impact generalizability (Watson, 2009). Participants attended an HSI with over 90% Latina/o students, thereby limiting the applicability to Latina/o students who attend similar institutions. Additionally, we surveyed only Latina/o students who were enrolled in postsecondary education. Conducting a similar study with Latina/o high school or community college students is important.

CONCLUSION

The findings point to the importance of exploring how positive psychology, cultural, and family factors are associated with Latina/o college students' vocational outcome expectations. Counselors can benefit Latina/o college students by becoming aware of specific positive psychology, cultural, and family factors to develop interventions and techniques to increase Latina/o students' vocational outcome expectations. Career practitioners can use narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990), solution-focused therapy, career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), and positive psychology (Seligman, 2002) to help Latina/o students make meaning of their experiences in order to develop positive and hopeful outcome expectations. Researchers also could endeavor to assess other factors to strengthen the emerging framework for predicting Latina/o students' career development outcomes.

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