Self-Construal, Career Decision Self-Efficacy, and Perceived Barriers Predict Mexican American Women’s Life Satisfaction

Brandy Piña-Watson, Natalia Jimenez, and Lizette Ojeda

This study used the social cognitive theory of well-being (SCTW; Lent, 2004) to examine the role of career decision self-efficacy (CDSE), perceived educational barriers, and independent self-construal on the life satisfaction of 176 Mexican American college women. A 3-step hierarchical regression analysis indicated that independent self-construal, CDSE, and fewer perceived educational barriers significantly predicted greater life satisfaction among Mexican American college women above and beyond the influence of socioeconomic status and generational status. These findings are consistent with SCTW and highlight the need for counselors and researchers to be aware of the role that self-construal, CDSE, and perceived educational barriers can have on Mexican American women’s life satisfaction. Implications for practice at the secondary-school and university levels are discussed.

Keywords: career decision self-efficacy, educational barriers, life satisfaction, Mexican American, women

From 1980 to 2008, there has been a 12.5% increase in Latina enrollment in postsecondary education, and Latinas outnumber Latino men in enrollment in undergraduate and graduate programs (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). Despite these promising statistics, college graduation rates continue to be lower for Latinas compared with women of other ethnicities, with only 9.4% of Latinas obtaining bachelor’s degrees (compared with 21.1% of European Americans, 13.6% of African Americans, 31.6% of Asians/Pacific Islanders, and 9.8% of Native Americans/Alaska Natives; Aud et al., 2010). The statistics are even more staggering for graduate degree attainment, with only 2.9% of Latinas obtaining a master’s degree and 1.0% obtaining doctoral or professional degrees (compared with, respectively, 8.4% and 3.1% of European Americans, 4.9% and 1.3% of African Americans, 14.0% and 6.4% of Asians/Pacific Islanders, and 3.6% and 1.4% of Native Americans/Alaska Natives; Aud et al., 2010).

Over the past couple of decades, scholars have tried to understand the causes of this educational disparity (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Fry, 2004;
Lopez, 2009; Vernez, Krop, & Rydell, 1999). One variable that has had an effect on student retention is life satisfaction (Frisch et al., 2005; Ojeda, Flores, & Navarro, 2011). Informed by Lent’s (2004) social cognitive theory of well-being (SCTW), the present study investigated the effects that independent self-construal, career decision self-efficacy (CDSE), and perceptions of educational barriers have on Mexican American college women’s life satisfaction.

SCTW

SCTW explains the dynamic process that is associated with life satisfaction and is based on social cognitive career, personality, and well-being theories (Lent, 2004; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). SCTW emphasizes the relationship between cognitive, personal, and environmental factors and how they promote or impede life satisfaction (Lent et al., 1994; Navarro, Flores, & Worthington, 2007). Specifically, the theory states that individuals will have higher life satisfaction when they (a) are active in the pursuit of goals they personally value, (b) feel a sense of competency at their ability to successfully pursue their goal and that there will be a positive outcome, and (c) view the environment in which they are situated as being supportive of this pursuit (Lent, 2004). In line with the propositions of this theory of well-being, the present study examined the variables that have particular relevance to Latinas in higher education. Specifically, we examined the effect of independent self-construal (independent-oriented goal pursuit cognitions), CDSE (sense of competency), and perception of educational barriers (lack of environmental supports) on the life satisfaction of Mexican American women attending a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI).

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is the cognitive appraisal of one’s life based on one’s own standards and is a component of subjective well-being (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Life satisfaction relies on how individuals determine what a fulfilling life is and includes both global and domain-specific cognitive appraisals of one’s happiness (e.g., school and family; Diener, 2009; Suldo, Shaffer, & Riley, 2008). In other words, it is what individuals establish as satisfying in their lives depending on their desires and goals (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005).

One of the main goals for college students is to be successful in their academic and career pursuits. Ojeda et al. (2011) found that Mexican American women who reached academic goals were more satisfied with life in general. Relationships have also been found between life satisfaction and various career-related variables, such as self-efficacy, perceived goal progress, environmental support, and academic satisfaction (Gloria et al., 2005; Ojeda et al., 2011; Suldo et al., 2008). Although research has examined the experience of barriers, career development, and self-efficacy with Latinas (Flores & O’Brien, 2002; Rivera, Chen, Flores, Blumberg, & Ponterotto, 2007), few studies have examined the effect these variables could
have on the life satisfaction of Mexican American college women. The present study seeks to fill this gap.

**Independent Goal Pursuit Cognitions: Independent Self-Construal**

According to the first criterion of SCTW, individuals are more satisfied with their life when they are active in the pursuit of goals they personally value. Independent self-construal is a personal cognitive process that is tied to the desire to attain goals relevant to the individual. According to Lent (2004), the content of an individual's goals, such as being individually versus collectively oriented, can have a differential influence on well-being. Individuals with an independent self-construal tend to emphasize uniqueness, goal accomplishment, and self-assertion (Singelis, 1994). Mexican American culture is traditionally collectivistic (Castillo & Cano, 2007); however, regardless of the university setting (e.g., HSI vs. predominantly White institution [PWI]), independent goal pursuits and orientations are encouraged and, in many instances, necessary for successful navigation of the U.S. educational system.

This is of particular importance for Mexican American women who are in college and nested in the university setting, which follows more mainstream norms (i.e., independence) of self-assertion and promotion. The mainstream culture and higher education in the United States tend to promote uniqueness, which is reflective of independent self-construal (Castillo et al., 2006; Hofstede, 2001). Because the college culture reflects the values and beliefs of European American culture (Castillo et al., 2006), to succeed in college, Mexican American women may need to adopt more individual goal pursuit orientations, such as independent self-construal. This includes adoption of individualistic behaviors, such as speaking up in class or engaging in direct communication (Singelis, 1994). Cheng et al. (2011) found that there was a positive link between independent self-construal and life satisfaction. Given that Mexican American women must adopt certain values of the European American culture (e.g., independence) to succeed in college, their life satisfaction may be affected when they are able to successfully adopt some of these values, which may help them to be better equipped to navigate the structural culture of the university setting.

**Sense of Competency: CDSE**

A further component of SCTW states that individuals are more satisfied with their life when they feel a sense of competency. CDSE is the degree to which one feels confident in the ability to successfully manage tasks in choosing and committing to a career (Taylor & Betz, 1983). Understanding the influence of CDSE on life satisfaction is important because career choice is a salient task in college. A career can be a crucial facet in people’s lives because it affects academic pursuits, how people view themselves, the stability of their employment, and their lifetime earnings (Aud et al., 2010; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). Hence, confidence in choosing and committing to a career can play a role in what is viewed as satisfactory in education and life for college students (Lent et al., 2005).
Flores, Ojeda, Huang, Gee, and Lee (2006) found that higher levels of CDSE were associated with better educational outcomes, which makes CDSE a highly important variable to study for Mexican American women given their current college educational attainment gap compared with women of other ethnicities. Other researchers have found that college students who had made career decisions were less depressed than their peers who had not (Rottinghaus, Jenkins, & Jantzer, 2009). Additionally, CDSE was positively related to life satisfaction in a diverse sample of undergraduate students (Wright & Perrone, 2010). Other related research found a positive correlation between Mexican American college students’ feeling that they could perform college-related tasks and their life satisfaction (Ojeda et al., 2011). Although research has investigated predictors of self-efficacy with Latinas (Flores & O’Brien, 2002; Rivera et al., 2007), few studies have examined the effect that efficacy beliefs in choosing a career could have on the life satisfaction of Mexican American college women.

Lack of Environmental Support: Perception of Educational Barriers

Finally, SCTW states that for individuals to experience higher levels of life satisfaction, they must view their environment as being supportive of their goal pursuits; thus, when the environment does not provide support, negative implications of well-being may occur (Lent, 2004). When Mexican American students perceive educational barriers, they may feel less efficacious in their career decision process (Ojeda & Flores, 2008), which can lower their ability to attain their educational goals (McWhirter, 1997). Ethnic minorities have perceived more educational barriers when trying to accomplish career goals compared with their European American counterparts (McWhirter, 1997). In addition, college women and Mexican Americans were more likely to perceive educational barriers to their educational goals compared with other minorities (Gloria et al., 2005; McWhirter, 1997; Ojeda & Flores, 2008). Additionally, Latinas tend to perceive a more stressful educational experience than Latino men and individuals of other ethnicities (Gandara & Osugi, 1994; Gloria et al., 2005; Rodriguez, Guido-Di Brito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000; Vasquez, 1982).

Two main categories of interrelated educational barriers may affect the life satisfaction of Mexican American women. First, there are barriers that exist before they enter higher education, such as gender role stereotyping, low family support, and low socioeconomic status (SES; Ojeda & Flores, 2008; Rodriguez et al., 2000). Second, there are barriers faced while in college, such as alienation, cultural stereotypes, and low educational preparation. Many Latinas may be first-generation college students and may lack access to knowledge on how to navigate college life and thus may undergo an acculturative process while in college (Gloria et al., 2005; Singelis, 1994). Therefore, Mexican American women may perceive barriers in almost all of their surroundings, making their educational experience challenging (Gloria et al., 2005; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Thus, environmental factors, represented by perceived educational barriers
in this study, may play a vital role in education goals and subsequent life satisfaction for Mexican American women.

**Purpose of the Study**

Educational disparities exist among Mexican American women, highlighting an increased need for studies examining the relationship between educational experience and psychological impact. Within the SCTW framework, the purpose of this study was to examine the role of CDSE, perceived educational barriers, and independent self-construal in the life satisfaction of Mexican American women. We hypothesized that CDSE and independent self-construal would positively predict these women’s life satisfaction and perceived educational barriers would negatively predict their life satisfaction above and beyond the background contextual factors of SES and generational status.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants included 176 Mexican American college women attending an HSI in a midsized city located near the Texas–Mexico border. Ages ranged from 17 to 42 years ($M = 19.43$, $SD = 2.41$, mode = 19). Generational status included 22.2% first generation (immigrants), 42.6% second generation (U.S. born, parents were immigrants), 11.9% third generation (parents were U.S. born), 13.1% fourth generation (grandparents were U.S. born), and 9.2% fifth generation (great grandparents were U.S. born; percentages do not total 100 because of rounding). With regard to SES, 21.6% identified as working class, 64.2% as middle class, 10.2% as upper middle class, 1.1% as upper class, and 2.9% did not respond. Participants varied in their academic majors, with the majority of participants identified as communications and health sciences majors.

**Measures**

**Life satisfaction.** The five-item Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) measures life satisfaction as a cognitive-judgmental process. Responses were provided on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate high satisfaction whereas lower scores indicate low satisfaction. A sample item includes “In most ways my life is close to my ideal.” The mean of the items was taken; for the current administration, the mean life satisfaction score was 5.18 ($SD = 1.21$). This scale has demonstrated concurrent validity by strong positive correlations with other measures of life satisfaction (Post, Van Leeuwen, Van Koppenhagen, & De Groat, 2012), and divergent validity was negatively correlated with a measure of depression (Brière, Vallerand, Blais, & Pelletier, 1995). Acceptable internal consistency as well as validity with college students has also been demonstrated ($\alpha = .87$; Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson, Eyjolfsdottir, Smari, & Young, 2009). For the present study, the alpha value was .85.

**Independent self-construal.** The 15-item Independent Self-Construal Scale is a subscale of the Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994). The Independent Self-Construal Scale measures the degree to which one views
oneself and the world in individualistic terms. Responses were provided on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree); a rating of 4 indicates a neutral response. A sample item includes “I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.” Mean scores were computed from the items, with a higher mean score indicating a person who emphasizes the individual (as opposed to the group) and who places a higher value on uniqueness and separateness. For the current administration, the mean independent self-construal score was 5.23 (SD = 0.78). Singelis (1994) reported good construct and predictive validity. Singelis and Sharkey (1995) reported an alpha coefficient of .70 for independent self-construal. For the present study, the alpha value was .81.

CDSE. The 25-item CDSE–Short Form (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) measures an individual’s degree of confidence in the ability to successfully make career decisions (Taylor & Betz, 1983). Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (no confidence at all) to 5 (complete confidence) in their ability to complete specific tasks related to career decision making. A sample item includes “Find out about the average yearly earnings of people in an occupation.” The mean of the items was taken, with higher scores indicating a higher level of confidence. For the current administration, the mean CDSE score was 3.91 (SD = 0.58). Betz et al. (1996) reported evidence of concurrent validity of this scale, with an alpha value of .94 in their study for the total scale. For the present study, the alpha value was .93.

Perception of educational barriers. The 26-item Perception of Barriers Scale (McWhirter, 1997) measures perceptions of the degree of different factors that one may view as being barriers that stand in one’s way of reaching educational goals. Participants ranked their perceptions of each barrier on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (definitely likely) to be a barrier to their education. The mean from these items was computed, with higher mean scores indicating higher perceptions of barriers to educational goal attainment. For the current administration, the mean perception of barriers score was 1.82 (SD = 0.58). Sample items include barriers such as “not enough money,” “not smart enough,” and “family responsibilities.” A previous study reported acceptable internal validity (α = .87; McWhirter, 1997). For the present study, the alpha value was .93.

Procedure

The present study is a secondary data analysis based on a larger study of Latina mental health. This study received approval from the institutional review boards of both the institution conducting the research and the institution in which the participants were recruited. Professors at a South Texas HSI granted us permission to recruit students in our social sciences courses. All students in the introductory and upper level courses were given the option to participate, including those who did not identify as being Mexican American or female.

The first and third authors led the administration and collection of the data. Each participant was given an informed consent form, which explained the benefits and risks of participation in the research, the purpose
of the study, and contact information for the primary investigator as well as the institutional review board from the researching university. All materials, including the questionnaire, were given in paper-and-pencil format in English. The consent procedure and questionnaire administration took approximately 30 minutes to complete, and all forms were completed during regular class time. Snacks were provided as incentives. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. If students declined participation, they were allowed to work on other assignments during the time of administration. All of the questionnaires that were distributed to consenting participants were collected, with no students declining participation after consent was given. However, only data from participants who identified as being Mexican American and female were included in the analyses.

Results

We examined the data to determine the accuracy of data entry, missing values, outliers, and adherence to multiple regression analysis assumptions. Table 1 lists descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients, and correlations among the measured variables. Several of the predictors were significantly correlated with the outcome variable, life satisfaction. Independent self-construal \((r = .46, p = .000)\) and CDSE \((r = .44, p = .000)\) were both significantly and positively correlated with life satisfaction. Additionally, perception of barriers was significantly and negatively correlated with life satisfaction \((r = -.32, p = .000)\).

We conducted a hierarchical linear regression to determine the predictive value and valence of each predictor (Thompson, 2006). Specifically, this analysis was conducted to examine the role of demographics (perceived SES and generational status) in Step 1, independent self-construal in Step 2, and career-related variables (perceived educational barriers and CDSE) in Step 3 on Mexican American college women’s life satisfaction. As seen in Table 2, in Step 1, demographics did not contribute significant variance in life satisfaction \((R^2 = .02)\). In Step 2, independent self-construal was added to the regression and was a significant predictor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(M)</th>
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<td>1. Perceived SES</td>
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<td>3. Independent SC</td>
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<td>.17*</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Barriers</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.25**</td>
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<td>5. CDSE</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Life satisfaction</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.46*</td>
<td>-.32**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
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Note. Perceived socioeconomic status (SES) and generational status (Generation) do not have a mean, standard deviation, or alpha value because they are single items. Independent SC = independent self-construal; Barriers = perceived educational barriers; CDSE = career decision self-efficacy.

\(^*p < .05. \quad **p < .01.\)
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Life Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived SES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent SC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
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<td>.33***</td>
<td>.26***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDSE</td>
<td>.49***</td>
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Note. Perceived SES = perceived socioeconomic status; Generation = generational status; Independent SC = independent self-construal; Barriers = perceived educational barriers; CDSE = career decision self-efficacy. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

(B = .56, β = .45, p = .000), resulting in 21% of the variance accounted for in life satisfaction (R² = .21, ΔR² = .19, p = .00). In the final step, the career-related variables increased the variance accounted for in life satisfaction to 31% (R² = .31, ΔR² = .10, p = .00), with independent self-construal (B = .33, β = .26, p = .001), perceived educational barriers (B = -.30, β = -.18, p = .01), and CDSE (B = .49, β = .29, p = .001) uniquely predicting life satisfaction. As was the case in the other steps, the demographic variables were not significant predictors of life satisfaction.

Discussion

Guided by SCTW, this study investigated how independent self-construal, CDSE, and perception of educational barriers affect the life satisfaction of Mexican American women attending an HSI. As hypothesized, independent self-construal, CDSE, and perceived educational barriers were significant predictors of Mexican American women’s life satisfaction when SES and generational status were held constant. SES and generational status were not significant predictors of life satisfaction. Mexican American college women who viewed their world through a more independent lens, had high CDSE, and perceived less educational barriers had higher life satisfaction.

Also as hypothesized, independent self-construal predicted higher levels of life satisfaction for Mexican American college women. According to SCTW, the content of an individual’s goals, such as being individually versus collectively set, can have a differential influence on well-being. This study supports this claim and highlights the benefit of Mexican American women in college adapting to the goal orientation of the university setting, which is generally driven by individualistic goals (Castillo et al., 2006; Hofstede, 2001). These findings indicate that when Mexican American...
college women have an independent sense of being that fits the university settings, they will report higher life satisfaction. Our findings do not necessarily mean that these women will need to discard the collectivistic ideals of their culture of origin; however, it is necessary that they possess independent goal orientations as a means of increasing their life satisfaction. Such individualistic traits have been found to benefit Mexican American college students fairly well. For instance, within the context of the university environment, Mexican Americans who were acculturated to the mainstream culture reported positive academic outcomes (Ojeda et al., 2011). Furthermore, the positive role of independent self-construal on life satisfaction has been supported in an East Asian sample of Chinese and Malay adults (Cheng et al., 2011).

As we expected, feeling confident about one’s career decision skills contributed to life satisfaction. According to SCTW, individuals will be more satisfied with their life when they feel a sense of competency. Choosing a career is an important task in college, where one prepares for a future job. Without confidence in one’s ability to choose a career, distress may occur (Rottinghaus et al., 2009). Our findings are in line with this theory given that CDSE was related to life satisfaction. This is consistent with research that has connected the two variables. For example, Wright and Perrone (2010) found a positive relationship between CDSE and life satisfaction in an ethnically diverse sample. Other scholars have found that college students who had made career decisions were less depressed than their peers who had not (Rottinghaus et al., 2009). Relatedly, college self-efficacy was related to higher life satisfaction for Mexican American college students (Ojeda et al., 2011).

Finally, this study supported the hypothesis that perceiving academic barriers would negatively predict life satisfaction. As highlighted by SCTW, individuals need to view their environment as being supportive of their goal pursuits. When Mexican American women perceive that there are barriers in their environment that hold them back from achieving, their quality of life diminishes. Therefore, if a Mexican American woman perceives barriers, such as a lack of financial support, lack of family support, or lack of role models, her educational experience may be affected, thus decreasing her satisfaction with life. This finding is important because Mexican American women in college often perceive more barriers compared with their White counterparts (Gloria et al., 2005; McWhirter, 1997). Additionally, these findings are similar with previous literature that ties Latina undergraduate students’ perception of barriers to well-being when they perceived incongruence between their culture and the university culture (Gloria et al., 2005). Given that Mexican American women often experience and perceive barriers during their educational pursuits, and given the findings that these barriers are tied to their satisfaction with life, it is then necessary to understand how to reduce these potential barriers for Mexican American college women to feel more satisfied with life.

Limitations and Future Research
Limitations of this study should be noted. First, participants were recruited from social science classes. Factors such as self-efficacy and perception of barriers may differ for Mexican American women in other fields such
as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Thus, future studies should capture the experiences of Mexican American women from diverse majors. In addition, participants were Mexican American college women at an HSI, which restricts generalizability toLatinas from other ethnic groups and women at varying educational settings (e.g., PWIs). Also, future studies should be replicated in regions that are less populated by Mexican Americans given that border culture, such as in the Texas–Mexico border region in which the majority of the population is of Mexican descent, is not representative of many Mexican American college women’s experiences. Variations in cultural context could contribute to variations in career-related factors such as self-efficacy and perception of barriers.

Another limitation is measurement. The construct of self-construal comprises independent and interdependent dimensions; however, as previously mentioned, because of the secondary nature of this study, we assessed only independent self-construal. Perhaps examining both interdependent and independent self-construal would yield more information about how possessing goal orientations of the heritage culture (interdependent) and mainstream culture (independent) might affect Mexican American women’s well-being. Previous research and acculturation theory indicate that when individuals are able to be bicultural and adopt characteristics of both the mainstream culture and their culture of origin, more positive outcomes result (Berry, 1980, 1988).

Implications for Practice

Results of this study have implications for counselors working with Mexican American college women. For instance, independent self-construal was related to higher life satisfaction. This suggests that promoting personal goals and self-expression is related to greater life satisfaction for Mexican American college women. Therefore, counselors may encourage Mexican American women to nurture their internal abilities, thoughts, and feelings within the university setting, such as by voicing their opinions in class (Singelis, 1994).

Furthermore, given that confidence in the ability to make career decisions was related to greater life satisfaction, career counselors may help foster self-efficacy in Mexican American college women by using a social cognitive approach. For example, vicarious learning (modeling) is one factor that promotes self-efficacy (Bandura et al., 2001). In a qualitative study with first-generation Latina college students, women expressed the importance of sharing their educational experiences and advice to other Latinas who were the first to attend college to promote academic success (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Informed by this study, a program could be established in which professionals connect Mexican American college women with Mexican American alumnae who have successfully navigated the career decision-making process and surpassed potential educational barriers. This type of program could provide Mexican American women with the modeling needed to establish greater self-efficacy and the belief that they can overcome potential barriers, which in turn may promote greater life satisfaction. One particular program that has been noted as providing mentoring, retention, and networking programs is La
Casa Cultural Latina at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Lozano, 2010).

Intervention programs should also be implemented at the middle school and high school levels. McWhirter, Valdez, and Caban (2013) recommended interventions based on information gathered through interviews with Latina adolescents about their postsecondary goals. One recommendation is to provide young Latinas with access to advocates who can provide encouragement and college knowledge. For example, middle schools may invite Mexican American career women to speak to students about their career journey, including barriers they overcame. This may help to plant a seed in young Mexican American girls’ minds about broadening their career horizons and having hope in surmounting potential barriers. In addition, programs may be established for Latina college students to provide mentoring to middle school girls similar to the evaluated program called Club Amigas, which is aimed at promoting educational aspirations and a strong Latino identity (Kaplan, Turner, Piotrkowski, & Silber, 2009). At the high school level, school counselors may consider discussing ways in which students may address financial barriers in pursuit of higher education.

Furthermore, empowerment programs that promote self-expression that mirrors an independent self-construal may help to prepare young girls to develop certain individualistic traits required to succeed in higher education. It is not uncommon for Mexican American women to be first-generation college students, which may limit the extent to which parents may help prepare these students to succeed in college and in turn feel satisfied with their life. Thus, schools should prepare these women to navigate higher education prior to starting college by teaching them skills that foster independence, facilitating their self-efficacy, and addressing potential barriers to promote satisfaction with life during the college years.

Conclusion

Given that Mexican American women lag behind in college graduation rates, and well-being has been related to academic outcomes, the present study sought to investigate how independent self-construal, CDSE, and perceived educational barriers may influence the well-being of Mexican American college women to inform possible interventions that could help increase these women’s academic success. Through its support of SCTW (Lent, 2004), this study advances the field’s understanding of the processes that predict the life satisfaction of these women. Our findings suggest that when Mexican American women are more independently oriented in their goal pursuits, feel they have the ability to make decisions about their future career, and perceive fewer obstacles to attaining their educational goals, they will be more satisfied in life. Intervention programs can be implemented at the college level by career counselors who are aware of the effect these variables can have on the well-being of these women. Additionally, this study can help in prevention efforts by making school counselors and educators aware of the factors with which they can help Mexican American girls before they enter the college setting. These prevention and intervention efforts can foster the
academic success of Mexican American women by improving their well-being while in college.

References


