LATINO/A STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SENSE OF BELONGING AT
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY: MI CASA ES SU CASA . . . OR IS IT REALLY?

by

SONIA ESQUIVEL

B.A., Fort Hays State University, 2000
M.S., Fort Hays State University, 2005

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Special Education, Counseling & Student Affairs
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2010

Abstract

This qualitative multiple case study explored the campus climate and sense of belonging of Latino/a undergraduate student participants at a predominately White university. Guided by the work of Hurtado and Carter (1997), relationships among several aspects of the college environment and sense of belonging were examined. In depth interviews regarding participants' perceptions of their experience identified how they perceived their campus climate in and outside of the academic classroom. The findings revealed how the participants' perceptions influenced their desire to graduate, commitment to, and sense of belonging. Prominent themes that emerged were: student identity, mi casa es su casa, and class size matters. The results indicated that the participants had mixed feelings regarding their experiences in and out of class, which affected their perceptions of the campus climate and their commitment to the university. Additional prominent findings were: mostly positive academic advising experiences; student organizations and advisors are an important part of the campus climate; the importance of familial support in the participants' sense of belonging; and the relationships between mothers and their sons/daughters. Participants identified offices and programs on campus that provide a positive campus climate, sense of belonging, and best serve Latino/a undergraduate students. The participants' perceptions of the campus climate were related to their sense of belonging. The results contribute to the research addressing campus climate and sense of belonging for Latino/a undergraduate students overall, including strategies for their retention. Implications for practice and future research are identified.

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To Manny (Manny the Cat) and Karina (**K**ari my Sugar), my greatest treasures, I

can play memory now ☺

I hope I have been an inspiration for you and can pave the way . . . Si se Puede!

A special dedication to Grandma Rachel, thanks for being such a phenomenal

woman, you have touched so many and your memory will live on.

CHAPTER 1 - **Introduction**

Background

Although education has been perceived historically as a path for upward occupational, economic, and social mobility in the United States, Latino/a youth completed college at much lower rates than other groups and were much more likely to drop out of high school (Sorensen, Brewer, Carroll, & Bryon, 1995). Although Sorensen et al.'s (1995) research was 15 years ago, according to Hurtado and Kamimura (2003), Lopez (2009), Fry (2005, 2009), and Nora (2003), Latino/a enrollments have not kept pace relative to their growing population due to continuing barriers related to access and retention in college. Unfortunately, 15 years since Sorensen et al.'s (1995) research, Latino/as still lag in the higher education system.

Although Latino/a population growth is rapid, barriers keep them from attaining a bachelor's degree. For example, a report completed in 2002 by Fry recognized the cost of tuition and a need to work and earn money were all factors that contribute to Latino/as not attending college. In a more recent study by Fry (2009), Latino/as entering the labor force increased from 40% in 1970 to 54% in 2007 (which includes joining the military). Another factor contributing to Latino/as not attending college, or their failure to graduate, is having no faith in the education system. The best-prepared Latino/as fare worse than Anglos of equal preparation, while Latino/as overall are less prepared than their less prepared Anglo peers (Fry, 2004, 2009; Gupton, Castelo-Rodriguez, Martinez, & Quintanar, 2009; Lopez, 2009). Respondents to Lopez's (2009) survey blamed Latino/a under preparation on: (a) lacking English language proficiency, (b) poor parenting, and

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(c) Latinas' high rate of teenage pregnancy. Latino/as that settle for graduating from high school feel they do not need a college degree to be successful because their parents view them as already far more educated than they. Lopez (2009) found that students had an overall dislike of school and felt that they did not need more education for the careers they wanted.

As more Latino/a students graduate high school and enroll in institutions of higher learning, it is becoming clear that these institutions are ill prepared to assist the Latino/a student body to attain bachelor and associate degrees (Thomas, 2005). According to Fry (2004), universities must be aware of the change in Latino/a demographics and obstacles they face in college. The only way institutions will be able to insure Latino/as have an equal opportunity to graduate is by acknowledging the population trends and preparing for the obstacles Latino/a students encounter when they enroll in higher education institutions.

Overview

Campus climate is a multifaceted reflection and manifestation of diversity that moves beyond the numbers (Hurtado, 2007). While the presence of individuals from different backgrounds results in diversity, climate refers to the experiences of individuals and groups on campus and the quality and extent of the interaction between those various groups and individuals. In a healthy climate, these groups or individuals generally feel welcomed, respected, and valued by the university. Campus climate is defined by Hurtado (2007), "as a measure—real or perceived—of the campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions" (p. 1). Because diversity and campus climate are integrated in a university, addressing campus climate is

an important and necessary component in any college mission statement or plan for diversity (Hurtado, 2007; Quaye & Harper, 2007). For institutions to retain students of color, diversity must be taken seriously and initiatives must go beyond a token representation in a mission statement (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). In order to provide a meaningful experience for diverse students, a university should have an implementation plan and the resources in place for Latino/a students who may need diversity organizations, mentors, or academic assistance (Hurtado, 2007).

Within the field of education, critical mass indicates a level of representation that brings comfort or familiarity to a mass of students recruited within the education environment (Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007). Without a critical mass of minority students and/or faculty, a lack of sensitivity to and understanding from the majority of the institution may result due to an uncomfortable environment for minority students and insufficient minority faculty and staff role models. Moreover, the lack of critical mass often fosters feelings of loneliness and isolation for minority students (Hagedorn et al., 2007). In a *Des Moines Register* article (Olson, 2010), Dr. Laura Rendon, former department chair and faculty member at Iowa State University, stated there is a paradox in minority students uniting and befriending White students. She believes one crucial factor in increasing the number of minority students on campus is building a critical mass of them.

There is much discussion in the media about the growth in numbers in the Latino/a community. Institutions are listening and recruiting these students to higher education. The concept of critical mass (Ascher, 1990 & Hurtado, 2002, 2007) is important to the development of a college campus community. However, in order to

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achieve critical mass in higher education, universities may pursue certain students, often from under-represented groups, without establishing the means to support them. Importantly, critical mass should not be considered a quota. An overarching goal for the administration should be to create a comfort level for students of color at predominately White institutions (PWIs). While simply increasing the numbers of minority students on campus might be a goal for an admissions office, this should not be the sole purpose of the institution. An institution should not recruit students of color without providing them with on-campus retention strategies. Increasing the racial/ethnic diversity on a campus while neglecting to attend to the racial climate and sense of belonging can result in difficulties for students of color as well as for White students (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Students of color experience discomfort and alienation in the form of racism, isolation, and the sense of not fitting in the new and unrecognized world (Gonzalez, 2002; Hurtado et al., 1999; Rankin & Reason, 2005).

Latino/a students are the largest minority population in the Midwestern state where the research was conducted. The U.S. Census Bureau (2009) recently announced that one of the counties in this Midwestern state was one of six counties across the nation that became majority-minority between 2007 and 2008. Majority-minority is where more than half the population is made up of a group that is not single-race, non-Hispanic White. This Latino/a population growth is further evidence for institutions to recognize the changing face of America—Latino/as are the next group with whom to make enrollment gains. It is important for institutions to be cognizant of and sensitive to this trend.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), Hispanic Americans constituted a population of 46.9 million of the U.S. population of 308,644,674 as of July 1, 2008—15% of the nation's population. According to a recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center (2009), Hispanics are currently the largest and youngest racial minority group in the U.S. One in five school children is Hispanic and one in four newborns is Hispanic. Never before in this country's history has a minority ethnic group comprised such a large share of the youngest Americans. By force of numbers alone, the adults these young Latino/as become will help shape the kind of society America becomes in the 21st century.

The focus of this research is on undergraduate Latino/as attending Kansas State University (KSU). (Pseudonyms are used for the names of all participants and the university in this study.) Hispanic often may be interchanged with Latino/a because these terms are used most frequently in the Midwest and by the researcher. Hispanic or Latino/a is a member of an ethnic group that traces its roots to 20 Spanish-speaking nations from Latin America and Spain (Passel & Taylor, 2009). However, Latino/a researchers' preference is Latino/a rather than Hispanic (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, 2002; Harpor & Hurtado, 2007). Hispanic is used primarily in the context of the population and government data reporting (Hurtado, 2002). Interestingly, Congress passed the only law in U.S. history in 1976 that mandated data collection and analysis specifically for Hispanics (Passel & Taylor, 2009). Latino/as are a highly heterogeneous population with large differences between and within groups. Some have lived for generations within the U.S., while others have migrated, mostly from Mexico (Hurtado, 2002; Marotta & Garcia, 2003).

Although the number of Latino/as is on the rise, results are discouraging when comparing the data of Latino/a college graduates to their African American, Anglo, and Asian American counterparts (Arbona & Nora, 2007). For example, only 9.6 % of Latino/as in the U.S. receive their bachelor's degree, compared with 26.8% of White Americans (Fry, 2004). Hispanic youth in 2007 had a lower college enrollment rate (44%) than either White (58%) or Black (53%) youth (Fry, 2009). Lopez (2009) conducted a national survey of 2,012 Latino/as ages 16 and older. Nearly nine in ten (89%) Latino/a young adults ages 16-25 reported that a college education was important for success in life, yet only about half that number (48%) plan to pursue a college degree.

A notable theory cited in student retention is Tinto's (1987, 1993) Theory of College Student Departure. His theory proposes that college students are more likely to withdraw if they are insufficiently integrated or if they maintain values that are sufficiently different from the values of the college they are attending (Christie & Dinham, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Tinto (1993) asserted that students enter an institution with certain background characteristics (e.g., family background, skills, abilities, and prior schooling) that shape their level of commitment for graduating. He also believes the students' level of commitment shapes their interaction within the various academic and social systems in college. Basically, the more the students are academically and socially involved on campus, the greater their commitment to the university (Tinto, 1993).

Tinto's (1993) theory has been criticized for not applying specifically to Latino/a students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). For this reason, Hurtado and Carter's (1997) sense of belonging theoretical framework provides the basis for analysis

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and interpretation of the data for this research. Hurtado and Carter (1997) contend that not all types of interaction with faculty enhance a Latino/a student's sense of belonging. Integration, as conceptualized by Tinto (1993), does not value culturally supportive alternatives to collegiate participation but instead emphasizes White-dominated activities, which may not foster Latino/a student success. The effects of involvement in sororities/fraternities and student government affect students' sense of belonging differently over the course of their college stay (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Hurtado and Carter's (1997) sense of belonging for students of color is presented and described in greater detail in Chapter Two.

This research focuses on Latino/as to become familiar not only with their cultural backgrounds and identities, but also to contribute insight that will increase their enrollment and graduation rates in higher education. Recruiting Latino/as to college is one issue, but graduating them is a different matter. Castellanos and Jones (2003) express it is critical for institutions of higher education to be accountable for understanding, recruiting, retaining, and matriculating Latino/a students. Factors institutions must focus on to create a sense of belonging are: (a) cultural and background variables, (b) socioeconomic status, (c) academic and acculturative stress, (d) family support, (e) campus climate and cultural congruity, and (f) faculty mentorship (Castellanos & Jones, 2003).

In addition to the factors noted, challenges Latino/as face include: immigration status, low socioeconomic status, the effects of cultural and gender role stereotyping, under preparation, stress factors from financial constraints, social and family obligations, and institutional marginalization (Fry, 2009; Gupton et al., 2009; Hernandez, 2000; Nora

& Ramirez, 2006; Torres, 2003). Hernandez emphasizes the importance not only of focusing on the barriers, but also of stressing the positive influences Latino/as acquired to graduate. For example, faculty or staff should validate students' desire to succeed and give them encouragement to persist whether in their academics or with their family. Encouraging Latino/as' efforts both in and out of the classroom is important; encouragement gives the students a sense of trust in their professors/advisors. Professors make a difference when they show they care to any student; they may not remember what was taught, but they will always remember how the teacher made them feel (Noddings, 2005; Nora & Ramirez, 2006).

Among Latino/as, family tradition is an important aspect of life and continues throughout the time that Latino/a students are enrolled in college (Nora & Ramirez, 2006; Torres, 2003). Family unity, respect, loyalty, and cooperation are expectations within the Latino culture. There is emphasis on respect, honoring the elderly, parents, the "Virgen de Guadalupe," and lastly males. Sex roles are delineated; however, as Latinas continue to become educated and take on leadership roles, this may change. In some families, males are still the dominant gender, whereas women are expected to be nurturing, submissive, and self-sacrificing. A change in this structure can produce conflict in the family dynamics (Sue & Sue, 2003). Latino/a students often are expected to come home every weekend, affecting their opportunities to become involved on campus because they have a commitment to the family (Gonzalez, 2002; Torres, 2003). Latino/a students must also work to help the family or babysit younger siblings (Fry, 2009; Gupton et al., 2009; Lopez, 2009).

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Many Latino/a college students arrive at PWIs and feel the need to assimilate into the Anglo community or they will not feel like a part of the institution (Johnson et al., 2007). Tierney (1992) supports this and argues that, according to integration theory, minorities must abandon their home culture to acculturate to higher education institutions, which have grown out of systems of oppression. Tinto's (1993) Student Departure Theory begins by recognizing the need for minority college students to remain connected to supportive members of their home communities. Congruent with this theory, if it had not been for the cohort of my good friends transferring at the same time I did to Fort Hays State University (FHSU), I would have questioned whether or not to stay at FHSU alone without support from people like me. It is difficult to be underrepresented at PWIs, to be a single parent, to be underprepared, and to feel alone. A feeling of isolation makes it difficult to feel a part of the institution and to persevere to graduate.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) found memberships in religious and social-community organizations are associated strongly with Latino/a students' sense of belonging. Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) also found that when students participate in student organizations and become members of the community, Latino/a students feel a sense of belonging and a sense of pride as a result of being a student at their institution. Involvement academically and socially in activities and student organizations improves student retention rates according to Astin's (1999) theory of student involvement. I was the advisor of the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) for several years at FHSU. Although I encouraged Latino/as to become involved in HALO, I also encouraged them to seek other extra-curricular activities. Latino/a students do not help themselves by segregating within their Latino/a student organizations and by not participating in extra-

curricular activities that do not pertain to Latino/as. The objectives are for Latino/a students to remove themselves from their comfort zone and meet new people, learn about themselves, and others, and grow as individuals when they challenge themselves to new surroundings and beginnings; it is all part of the college experience.

Bourassa (1991) claimed that for a college education to be successful, all students must be prepared to live in and contribute to a society that is increasingly diverse. Students progress through college in different stages. Higher education professionals will undoubtedly face greater challenges and responsibilities regarding the development of campuses that not only tolerate, but also celebrate diversity to provide a welcoming campus climate.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows: (a) statement of the research problem, (b) purpose of the study, (c) research questions, (d) definition of terms, (e) delimitations of the study, (f) limitations of the study, (g) significance of the study, (h) researcher's perspective, and (i) organization of the study.

Statement of the Research Problem

Today's society is faced with many challenges associated with diversity. Ideally, everyone holds a shared responsibility to facilitate and enhance genuine acceptance and collaboration among the citizens of this great nation. Especially in higher education, it is the responsibility of the professionals to assure an accepting, supportive environment for all students. In order to achieve a positive learning environment for a diverse student body, it is prudent to identify the existing campus climate. Because minority students attending PWIs experience lower levels of integration and sense of belonging, yet higher levels of alienation and discrimination, Kansas State University is an excellent setting to

research campus climate and sense of belonging for undergraduate Latino/a students (Gonzalez, 2002; Gupton et al., 2009; Harpor & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1999; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Rankin & Reason, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to explore, reveal, and determine enrolled undergraduate Latino/a students' perceptions of the campus climate and sense of belonging at Kansas State University. With the growth of Latino/as in college, many institutions still retain structures and practices that reflect assumptions that preserve predominately White norms (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). Because minority students attending PWIs experience lower levels of integration and sense of belonging, yet higher levels of alienation and discrimination, it is important to research Latino/as' perceptions related to campus climate and sense of belonging (Gonzalez, 2002; Gupton et al., 2009; Harpor & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1999; Jones et al., 2002; Rankin & Reason, 2005).

Research Questions

To examine the experiences of undergraduate Latino/a students at Kansas State University, the following research questions were posed:

How do Latino/a students perceive the campus climate in regard to sense of belonging at Kansas State University? Campus climate is defined "as a measure—real or perceived—of the campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions" (Hurtado, 2007, p. 1).

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1. How do Latino/a students perceive their experience outside of class (student life, residential halls, community)?

2. How do Latino/a students perceive their experience in the academic classroom?

What effect, if any, do Latino/a student perceptions of campus climate have on their likelihood of being retained?

1. How do Latino/a students' perception of campus climate influence their commitment to Kansas State University?

2. How do Latino/a students' perception of campus climate influence their desire to graduate?

3. How do Latino/a students' perception of campus climate influence their sense of belonging?

This was a multiple case qualitative study that explored how undergraduate Latino/a students perceive the campus climate at Kansas State University. In a healthy climate, individuals and groups generally feel welcomed, respected, and valued by the university. Kansas State University is a predominantly White, land grant, research extensive institution in the Midwest. The population from which the sample was selected consists of undergraduate Latino/a college students at Kansas State University's main campus. Six hundred thirty-nine undergraduate full-time Latino/a students attending Kansas State University were sent an email inviting them to participate in research on their perceptions of the campus climate and their sense of belonging.

Definitions of Terms

The definitions presented below were used during the interviews to help Latino/a students understand the terminology. They also are used throughout the chapters to help the readers better understand the research.

Critical Mass: Increasing the number of students by special action (Hurtado, 2007)

Campus Climate: "A measure—real or perceived—of the campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions" (Hurtado, 2007, p. 1).

Generation Status: Generation status refers to whether an individual is the first in his/her family to graduate college. The person is second generation if the individual's parent/s have a college degree from a university.

Hispanic: Americans of Spanish origin or descent; Americans who identify themselves as being of Spanish-speaking background and trace their origin from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America (Passel & Taylor, 2009).

Latinos: A heterogeneous population of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and South Americans who inhabit regional communities (Hurtado, 2002). Latino is the masculine form, whereas Latina is the feminine form of the word. Latino/a is the preferred identity, reference, and usage by researchers of this origin in higher education.

Transfer Status: The individual has attended a previous college or if this is the individual's first college.

Translations

Mi Casa es su Casa: My home is your home.

Familia: Family.

Virgen de Guadalupe: Virgin Mary.

Delimitations of the Study

The following factors are delimitations of the study:

1. Participants were individually interviewed and not in a focus

    group.

2. Participants were only Latino/as.

Limitations of the Study

The following factors are limitations of the study:

1. Participants are from the same university; therefore, it is not a representation of

    all Latino/as at predominately White institutions.

2. Participants consisted of only undergraduate Latino/a students who are full-

    time; therefore, their responses did not represent all Latino/a students on

    campus.

3. The initial email sent to participants was in the summertime.

Significance of the Study

Latino/as are the fastest growing minority population in the United States

(Marotta & Garcia, 2003; Sorensen et al., 1995). The number of Latino/a college

graduates also is increasing. As a higher education major with an emphasis in student

affairs, researching the Latino/a student experience in college is relevant and fascinating

to a Latina researcher who has persevered and overcome the challenges and barriers cited in related literature (Esquivel, 2005). The results of this research will benefit professionals in student affairs positions who work with Latino/a student retention. Because Latino/a enrollment continues to increase, more research is needed to ensure a positive campus climate and experience for this student population in higher education (Hernandez & Lopez, 2005; Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2002; Milem et al., 2005). This study will contribute to the research and literature base for campus climate and sense of belonging for Latino/a undergraduate students.

Researcher's Perspective

As a first generation Latina from Mexico in an education system that is comprised of predominately White students and administrators, I understand completely where the Latino college students' concerns originate—the feeling of isolation, as though you are the only one on campus, how no one else looks like you, yet the White students all look the same. There is an uncomfortable sensation to be stared at as though the White students are asking, "What is she doing here?" White students seem like they have seen a ghost or never seen a dark skinned person. This is my perception of the psychological climate of the institution. I will never forget when I was applying for my Ph.D. and the student worker thought I was in the wrong office! Or, people just assume I work in the ESL department; or people seem so amused that I could be getting my Ph.D. I know why: because it is not expected of me, or of my people, to further our education. I especially detest those words of, "Oh, she is just trying to be White," from my own people because we have not been expected to pursue our education. I was one of "those"

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underprepared, first generation students with a below average ACT, an ESL student, and teenage mother. Because of the mentors and the support of my family, I have overcome those aforementioned challenges.

This and many more stories can be shared about my experiences of being a guest in someone else's house. I certainly support the research (Gonzalez, 2002; Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997) that faculty make a difference in a student feeling welcomed and having a sense of belonging at his/her institution. It was the church community, family, student organizations, and relationships among peers and between faculty/students that contributed to my sense of belonging at my institutions. The underlying question now is if the current students at Kansas State University feel as though, "Mi Casa es su Casa," meaning "my house is your house," which is a common expression in Latino culture. It conveys openness toward family and friends and the importance of helping one another (Torres, 2003).

Organization of the Study

Chapter Two reviews the research literature as it relates to campus climate and diversity and more specifically sense of belonging of Latino/as at predominately White institutions. Chapter Three delineates the methodology for the research. Chapter Four presents the results and analysis. And, Chapter Five provides the discussion of the results, interpretation of the results, contributions to the research, and implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the literature relating to campus climate in general as well as the perceptions of Latino/as regarding campus climate. Campus climate and diversity are integrated terms. Research on campus climate and diversity are so interrelated that they must be addressed in concert. Thus, diversity issues are integrated. Research regarding sense of belonging, campus climate, and their relationship to Latino/as is needed, in particular at PWIs in the Midwest. While there is a well-developed literature base on campus climate, more research is needed to inquire about and reveal Latino/a student perceptions of their sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; Jones et al., 2002). The discussion in this chapter is organized into the following sections: (a) theoretical framework, (b) campus climate for diversity, and (c) Latino/a students' sense of belonging.

Theoretical Framework

Positive relationships with faculty and students are seen as indicators of the extent to which students have integrated themselves into the academic and social aspects of a college community. Tinto (1993) asserted that such relationships and community integration are critical to students' first-year persistence decisions. He contends that academic and social integration are related positively to persistence and argues that high levels of integration into academic and social communities on campus lead to higher levels of institutional commitment, which in turn compels students to persist.

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However, several scholars (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 1992) have taken issue with the centrality of integration to college success, especially as it pertains to under-represented students. They argue that Tinto's (1993) Student Departure Theory emphasizes student, rather than institutional, responsibility for change and adaptation. Another argument is that campus climate plays a major role in engaging racial/ethnic minorities who attend PWIs because they experience alienation as well as social and cultural isolation on these campuses (Harpor & Hurtado, 2007). For first-year racial/ethnic minorities at PWIs, becoming adjusted to college is critical for their retention, much more so than for White students (Harpor, Byars, & Jelke, 2005). These feelings of social and cultural isolation on campus that racial/ethnic minorities may experience make it more difficult for them to engage, persist, and develop (Hurtado et al., 1998).

Racial/ethnic minorities at PWIs have to manage the normal academic rigors of college, as well as adjust to an environment that has the possibility of being foreign, whereas this is not the case for their White peers. Or, the PWI may be socially exclusive if there are no organizations of which racial/ethnic minorities feel a part. The PWI also may have a culturally irresponsive campus climate filled with personnel foreign to racial/ethnic minorities (Harpor et al., 2005; Hurtado et al., 1998). All of these possibilities of adjustment could affect racial/ethnic minorities' social and academic integration.

Tinto's (1993) Theory of Student Departure highlights the critical importance of engagement and involvement in the learning communities of the college. A number of studies support the idea that students' experiences of involvement, engagement, and

affiliation are central to their development and progress in college (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Further criticism has been leveled at Tinto's (1993) model regarding the nature of integration and the applicability of many aspects of the model to students from diverse backgrounds (Attinasi, 1989; Braxton, Sullivan, & Mannyson, 1997; Tierney, 1992). Hurtado and Carter (1997) and Baird (2000) identified ambiguities in some of the concepts, notably social integration. The measures of academic and social integration include the following: the effort or time spent in activities; students' perceptions, reported behaviors, and participation in specific activities; students' satisfaction with aspects of the social or academic environments; students' interpersonal relations; objective performance criteria; or a combination of these measures (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Tinto (1993) recommends that students form a connection with faculty or staff at the institution during their first year; otherwise, they are less likely to persist. Consequently, students unable to establish such relationships are responsible for their failure; no fault is attributable to institutional shortcomings (Johnson et al., 2007). In addition, Hurtado and Carter (1997) contend that not all types of interaction with faculty enhance a Latino/a student's sense of belonging. An example of this type of interaction with faculty could be having a faculty member as an advisor, who only advises the student on courses and never asks how the classes are going. Integration, as conceptualized by Tinto (1993), does not value culturally supportive alternatives to collegiate participation but instead emphasizes Anglo activities, which may not foster Latino/a student success. In fact, Tierney (1992) questions if Tinto's theory (1987) is actually assimilation in disguise rather than social and academic integration. Moreover,

the effects of being involved in sororities/fraternities and student government affect students' sense of belonging differently over the course of their college stay (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Because of its explicit emphasis on practices relevant for culturally and linguistically diverse students, Hurtado and Carter's (1997) theory and research on Latino/a students' sense of belonging were used to analyze and interpret the data in this research. A sense of belonging contains both cognitive and affective elements. The individual's cognitive evaluation of his or her role in relation to the group is an affective response. Instead of integration, Hurtado and Carter use the concept of *membership* to avoid the assumptions of conformity and assimilation for which Tinto's (1993) theory has been criticized.

Membership does not simply reflect behavior. A student can be a member of an organization; however, not attending the meetings or gathering results in not being connected with the group. Rather, it takes making sense of the students' environment through their involvement in peer groups that help them acquire the skills they need in college. This involvement is through activities and social groups to which students belong, as well as groups in which they can discuss their coursework with other students inside and outside of class. The specific group activities help build cohesiveness among the members, resulting in the individuals' sense of affiliation and identification with the college. More specifically, for Latino/a students at PWIs, feeling at home on campus and in the community is associated with maintaining interactions both within and outside the college community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Hurtado and Carter (1997) offer the concept, *sense of belonging*, which "captures the individual's view of whether he or she feels included in the college community" (p. 327). Students' success is predicated in part upon the extent to which they feel welcomed. A key influence on Latino/a students' sense of belonging is their perception of racially supportive campus climates (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Moos (1979), although recognized for his work on campus climate, does not acknowledge issues specific to students of color in relation to campus climate. Tanaka (2002) argued that Tinto's (1993) theory also can be applied to campuses with ethnically diverse students. However, he warns regarding the need to foster meaning and harmony across groups in times of fragmentation linked to rapidly changing student racial demographics—something modern theorists could not have predicted in the 1970s. However, Hurtado et al. (1998, 1999) identified campus climate as central to the persistence and attrition of students of color, particularly those attending PWIs. Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) contend that a climate that encourages students' interaction with other students of color and provides strong academic support from faculty leads to a higher sense of inclusiveness for students. Hurtado and Carter (1997) acknowledged the ambiguities in some of the concepts, notably social integration.

Latino/as at PWIs often face stress related to their minority status. More specifically, freshmen tend to display psychological sensitivity to the social climate of the campus, as demonstrated through interpersonal tensions with White students and faculty and actual or perceived experiences of racism and discrimination (Smedley, Meyers, & Harrell, 1993). Nora and Cabrera (1996) developed a measure of perceptions of prejudice and discrimination on campus. The effect on perceptions of prejudice and discrimination

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on campus climate, faculty behavior, and in-class experiences for minorities was significantly greater than that for non-minorities. Academic experiences with faculty and staff, social integration, academic and intellectual development, goal commitment, and institutional commitment were statistically significant for the effect on the perceptions of prejudice and discrimination.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) applied their ideas to Tinto's (1993) sense of integration. They decided sense of belonging was more appropriate to describe minority students' reactions to their institutions than "integration." They then found that certain academic and social activities were related positively to the sense of belonging in a sample of 287 third-year Latino/a college students. For example, students who interacted more frequently with their professors or those who tutored other students had a stronger sense of belonging.

Campus Climate for Diversity

In exploring and describing the impact of forces that interact to create the often-contested conditions under which students can learn successfully from diversity, this research draws primarily from Hurtado et al. (1998, 1999). Their framework for understanding campus racial climate is appropriate for several reasons. First, it has an empirical foundation, drawing from the body of research on the impact of climate on student learning and development. Second, the framework treats campus climate as a multidimensional phenomenon that is shaped by the interaction of external and informal forces. Third, the framework offers specific suggestions on how to improve educational policy and practice through the engagement of campus diversity (Milem et al., 2005).

The external government/policy context, for example, involves state and federal programs and policies that have affected and will continue to have an impact on higher education. These include financial aid policies and the Higher Education Act of 1965, which created the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and Guaranteed Student Loan program. The external sociohistorical context involves more of the human experience of society. The events of 9/11 and the country's response to these events are sociohistorical forces that have had profound effects on campus racial climate (Milem et al., 2005) and resulted in greater hostility toward people of Middle Eastern descent. Hence, institutions have had to make accommodations and improve the campus racial climate for these students.

These external forces interact with internal forces to produce the campus racial climate. To describe these internal forces, Hurtado et al. (1998, 1999) highlight four dimensions that result from the educational programs and practices of an institution: (a) structural diversity, (b) historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, (c) psychological climate, and (d) behavioral climate.

Structural Diversity

Structural diversity refers to the numerical and proportional representation of various racial and ethnic groups on campus (Milem et al., 2005). Institutions that increase the diversity on their campus and make diversity a part of their mission communicate to students and faculty that diversity is a priority for the campus. Therefore, it is not surprising that Hurtado et al. (1998, 1999) argue that structural diversity is the single dimension of the climate that most campus leaders think about when creating their campus mission and initiatives.

However, it is easy for institutional administrators to focus solely on this dimension. In fact, a frequent assertion is that a "critical mass" of people from different racial groups on campus diversifies the institution and supports the mission of the college. Yet, with a critical mass, administrators must respond to questions about determining how much diversity is "enough" to achieve the educational benefits of diversity (Milem et al., 2005). Institutions must ask (a) how much diversity is needed to achieve diversity and (b) how to integrate diversity on campus in order to be culturally enriching to all students. A healthy, diverse campus climate is the inclusion of students, faculty, staff, and administrators of all backgrounds. A curriculum that reflects the historical and contemporary experiences of under-represented people enhances the campus climate. Reinforcing the mission statement, by stating their support of diversity can result in another form of measurement. Most importantly, faculty, staff, and administrators who are open and responsive help define and create a healthy climate (Hurtado, 2007).

The enrollment history of an institution, especially one challenged to attract students of color, can be difficult to overcome. Successful recruitment of students of color often is created by a positive initial response by the institution to the entry of students of color. Improvements in the structural diversity of the institution are seen as the first step toward improving campus climate for diversity; however, an increase in student numbers is only the beginning. The structural diversity of an institution impacts students' experiences in a variety of ways. An institution with a high proportion of White students provides limited opportunities for students to interact across racial and ethnic lines, thus altering student learning (Hurtado et al., 1998). Students of color also

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frequently feel that they have a limited number of social options from which to choose, leading to their feelings of isolation (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Low numbers of students of color many times result in tokenism on campus. Students subjected to tokenism feel as though they are symbols and not valued as individuals (Jones et al., 2002; Milem et al., 2005). However, increasing the number of diverse students at PWIs can be challenging. With this in mind, it is critical that campuses create a student-centered environment to make students feel valued. When students feel that they are genuinely valued as individuals, they are less likely to feel tension regarding their race or ethnicity (Hurtado, 1992).

Historical Legacy of Inclusion or Exclusion

This dimension refers to the historical vestiges of segregated schools and colleges, which continue to affect the climate for racial and ethnic diversity on college campuses (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999). An institution must recognize the difference between desegregation versus the celebration of diversity for educational quality. Institutions also must (a) be clear about any history of exclusion that has occurred on their campus, (b) discuss efforts over time to be more inclusive, and (c) address any persistent negative consequences related to their history. Purposeful review of university policies and procedures is an important exercise in determining if current processes in any way breed unfair treatment. A clearly stated mission that truly gives meaning to the daily functioning of the university is essential (Jones et al., 2002).

It is important to note that most PWIs have a much longer history of exclusion than they do of inclusion and that history continues to shape racial dynamics on their campuses. One product of this history of exclusion can be that benefits sustained for

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particular groups go unrecognized and often work to the detriment of groups that have

been historically excluded by the institution (Milem et al., 2005). To bring about change

in an institution, individuals must see, on their own and as clearly as possible, the

magnitude of inequities. They then must analyze and integrate the meaning of these

inequities so they are moved to act upon them (Bensimon, 2004).

Diverse faculty and staff are critical as well. When an institution's faculty and

staff represent diverse backgrounds, students of color feel better supported and the

quality of the educational experience improves for all (Gonzales, 2002; Hurtado, 2007;

Jones, et al., 2002) Diverse faculty and staff bring a broader perspective to campus, both

inside and outside the classroom. However, diverse faculty and staff members face many

of the same challenges that students of color do on the campuses of PWIs (Delgado,

Manlove, Manlove, & Hernandez, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1999).

Psychological Climate

The psychological climate for diversity involves students' thoughts about group

relations on campus. Perceptions vary by individual and across ethnic groups. Hurtado et

al. (1998, 1999) described the psychological dimension of campus climate as including

views held by individuals about intergroup relations as well as institutional responses to

diversity, perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict, and attitudes held toward

individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

In a study exploring how students in different racial groups experienced their

campus climates, Rankin and Reason (2005) found that:

Students of color experienced harassment, defined as any offensive, hostile, or

intimidating behavior that interferes with learning, at higher rates than White

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students, although female White students reported higher incidence of gender harassment. Further, students of color perceived the climate as more racist and less accepting than did White students, even though White students recognized racial harassment at similar rates as students of color. (p. 45)

These researchers also found that administrators, students, and faculty from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are likely to view the campus climate in dramatically different ways than do their White counterparts.

Behavioral Dimension

The behavioral dimension of campus climate consists of the state of general social interactions on campus. It includes individual interactions across racial and ethnic boundaries and the interactions that occur among different groups of students on campus. Student involvement, in both formal and informal interactions, is essential to the overall quality of the educational experience. Formal interactions occur in the classes students attend and as they participate in student organizations. Reflecting on the role of student organizations in the behavioral climate of a campus, Hurtado et al. (1999) stated, "Although some researchers suggest that racial/ethnic student organizations and minority programs contribute to campus segregation, a series of studies refutes this perspective" (p. 54). Torres (2003) and Gonzalez (2002) both found Latino/a students focus on finding others who share their values and culture to enhance their sense of belonging.

Academic advisors are a key source in building relationships with the students. They advise students on which courses to take and should provide their students a service by encouraging their advisees to engage in educationally purposeful activities such as the learning communities, student-faculty research, service learning, internships, and study

abroad. These activities tend to have a greater effect on engagement and student learning because they require students to take responsibility for activities requiring daily decisions and tasks such as helping others, meeting goals and objectives, community involvement, and learning a new culture and/or language. Advisors also can recommend and encourage their advisees to engage with other peers in campus events or to participate in student organizations. As a result, their participation creates a culture that fosters student success while becoming invested in the activities and more committed to the institution (Kuh, 2008).

Figure 1 presents a summary of the four dimensions that shape campus climate and affect the degree to which diversity efforts lead to educational benefits for students. Permission was obtained by the primary author to reproduce the figure (Appendix A).

Figure 2.1 Hurtado et al.'s (1999, p. 8) Conceptualization of Campus Racial Climate

Campus Racial Climate

Government/Policy Context → Sociohistorical Context ↓

| Historical Legacy of Inclusion/Exclusion | → | Structural Diversity |
| Psychological Climate | ↔ | Behavioral Dimension |

Institutional Context
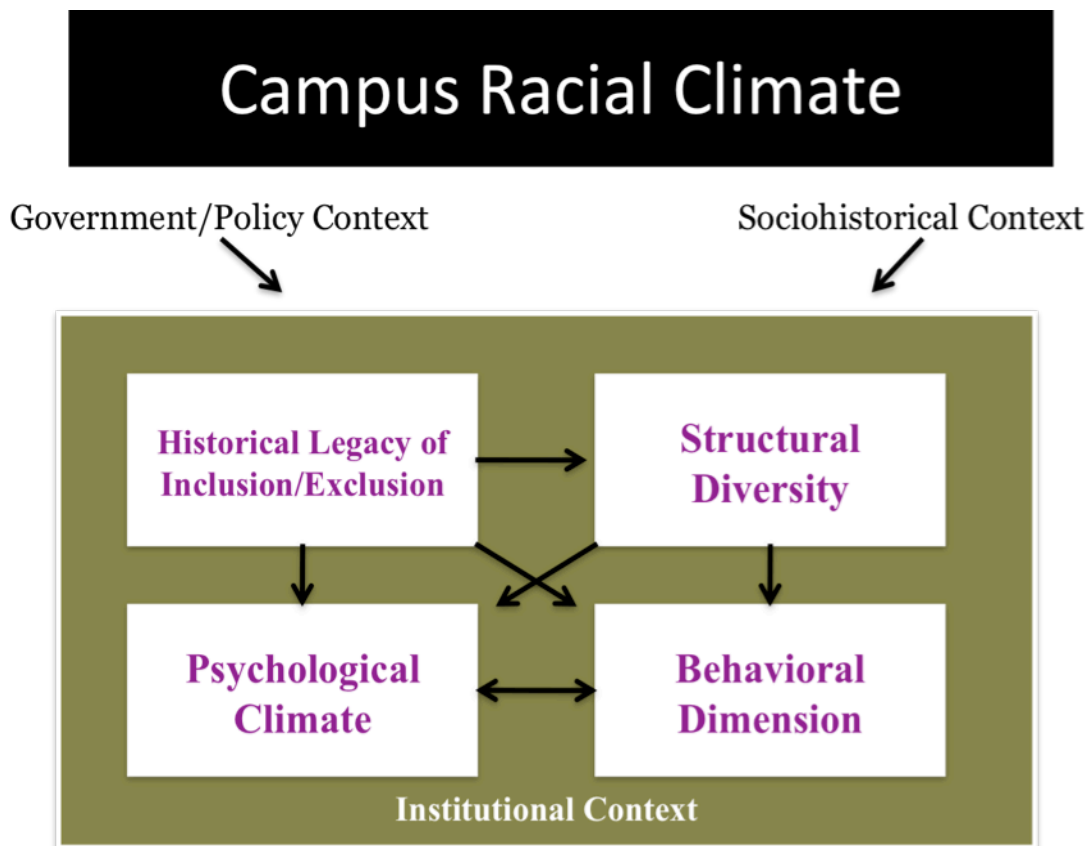
(Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999) 8

Latino/a Students' Sense of Belonging

One of the more recent challenges for PWIs is molding a campus culture that promotes a sense of belonging and supports the goal of improving the retention rates of an increasingly diverse student body (Gonzalez, 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008). The challenges, such as a new place, new friends, and intensity of classes, faced by all students as they arrive on education campuses are stressful enough to hinder Latino/as' sense of belonging.

However, students of color who arrive at PWIs are faced with added stress related to their minority status on campus. Minority students attending PWIs were found to experience lower levels of integration and sense of belonging, yet higher levels of alienation and discrimination at PWIs (Gupton et al., 2009; Harpor & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1999; Jones et al., 2002).

In-and-Out of Class Experiences

Academic integration (i.e., the degree of students' academic involvement on campus, both in and out of the classroom), has a significant impact on Latino/a students' persistence to degree attainment (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Gonzalez's (2002) findings were similar. A Latino participant explained his in-class experience:

> They stuck me in a class where I had to listen to English tapes; it was a waste of time. They must have thought I was stupid or something just because my English wasn't great. I had to fight my way out of those classes and into regular ones. It wasn't until I was in regular classes that teachers started to see I was smart. (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 198)

Lacking English proficiency is one of the reasons Latino/a students do not pursue their education (Lopez, 2000). This is exemplified by a student who feels the professors treat him/her as though she/he is stupid for not speaking English well. These students tend to have a profound sense of loneliness and often feel the need to prove their intellectual abilities (Quaye, Tambascia, & Talesh, 2009). Negative stereotypes also pose a barrier for minority students who often encounter questions about their academic capability (Gonzalez, 2002).

The in-class experience for Latino/as in Jones et al.'s (2002) study, based on Hurtado and Carter's (1997) sense of belonging theoretical framework, had mixed results. Some faculty were perceived as supportive and willing to assist students, whereas other faculty stereotyped students and expected them to answer questions regarding their culture. Latino/a students were viewed as the experts on their history and culture, being called on in class to discuss "what Latinos think or to simply provide the minority perspective" (Jones et al., 2002, p. 31). Continually having to represent their entire race/ethnicity in discussions of diversity and feeling that their actions as a racial minority is generalized to the entire group are two major challenges Latino/as face in the classroom (Quaye et al., 2009).

Aligned with the study conducted by Gonzalez (2002), Jones et al. (2002) found the students felt pushed away from the faculty/administration based on faculties' need to get them either graduated, to a different section, or simply to refer them to the cultural center to avoid their responsibility to students. Although it can be difficult to have the skills to determine students' racial identity development levels, the failure to recognize this element can lead to learning environments that are racially hostile or discriminatory (Quaye et al., 2009). Latino/a participants in the Harper and Hurtado (2007) study about campus racial climates had perceptions of the campus as being especially "White" (p. 18). The concerts featured White musicians. The activities catered to White culture. The football games were made up of a lot of "drunk" White students. Most of the books read in class were by White authors and contained White viewpoints. White students made up most of the classes. The Latino/a students felt there was nothing available for them except the cultural center. Similar to this research, Gonzalez's (2002) findings also

emphasized the importance of the cultural center and referenced the rest of the campus community as the "White world" (p. 212).

Consistent with Jones et al. (2002) and Rankin and Reason (2005), a study by Harpor and Hurtado (2007) found that minority students experienced their campus climate as more racist and less accepting than their Anglo peers. Similarly, Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that the perceptions of racial hostility had negative effects on Latino/a students' sense of belonging, or simply not fitting in. Minority students who perceived less racial tension were more likely to succeed academically (Hurtado et al., 1999)

Rankin and Reason (2005) examined perceptions of campus climate. They included all students, though focused on a cohort of students of color from 10 campuses. Fourteen thousand surveys were sent and 7,347 surveys were returned, a 52% return rate. The main purpose was to explore how students in different racial groups experienced their campus climate. The results showed a greater percent (33%) students of color experienced harassment (33%) than White students (22%). The key findings were that students of color perceived the climate as "racist," "hostile," and "disrespectful," and more racist and less accepting than did White students.

A study conducted by Hurtado and Carter (1997) explored the perceptions of the campus racial climate for Latino/as. The study focused on a student cohort of the top PSAT achievers and some were semifinalists for national scholarships. The final sample consisted of 272 students. The results showed Latino/a students' academic activity engagement suggested a merging of students' social and academic interactions that may contribute to their sense of belonging in college. The academic activities included

tutoring, group projects, academic honor societies, or working on research projects with faculty members. The key finding was students' overall participation rate increased from their second to the third year in each activity. Nevertheless, only students who belonged to religious organizations and sororities/fraternities had a stronger sense of belonging than did non-members in their second year.

Jones et al. (2002) found in their study of minorities at PWIs that there was racism on campus and a lack of support for diversity. The cultural center often was used as a place to send students when they had problems and the institution did not have the resources to attend to them. Latino/a students had a sense of "not belonging and feeling different" (Jones et al., 2002, p. 28). More specifically, Latino/a students highlighted encountering blatant racism on campus. The most striking feeling expressed by Latino/a students in this study was that of being a "guest in someone else's house" (Turner, 1994, p. 356).

Gonzalez (2002) also found one of the participants feeling like a guest in the classroom, in the dorms, and on campus. The cultural center was known as the Latino/a students' "home away from home" (Jones et al., 2002, p. 30). It was a place Latino/a students could go when they were tired of dealing with the "White world" (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 212). Hurtado and Carter's (1997) findings were similar for Latino/a students who attended PWIs. Feeling "at home" in the campus community was associated with maintaining interactions both within and outside the college community.

Kapp and Marr (2002) emphasized the differences between first-and second-generation college students. Because first generation Latino/a college students are the first to attend in their family, college is a new world for parents as well as for the student.

As a result, for first generation college students, the experience is socially overwhelming for the parents and an academically overwhelming experience for the student. The first generation Latino household lacks familiarity with American higher education. As a result, some parents do not understand why their children even attend college (Kapp & Marr, 2002). Similarly, Torres (2003) found the parents of Latino/a students do not understand why, in addition to attending class, students also must spend time studying.

Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) mirrored a longitudinal study by Nora and Cabrera (1996). Their findings revealed Latino/a students who perceived a hostile climate for diversity on a campus also expressed difficulty in the classroom socially and emotionally, as well as difficulty having a sense of belonging to the institution. Ten public universities that varied in geographical location, size, and student demographics were selected for the study. The survey was designed to assess how students' exposure to diversity (in and out of classroom experience) influenced their cognitive, social-cognitive, and democratic learning and development. Three surveys were administered: (a) one for pre-college socialization experiences (n=13,520), (b) a follow-up survey specifically questioning the effect of the college experience (n=4,757), and (c) at the end of Latino/a students' second year of college (n=370). Results showed no significant differences among Latino/as based on ability, gender, socioeconomic status, generation, or being a first generation college student. Nevertheless, students whose primary language was Spanish were more likely than English dominant speakers to perceive a hostile climate for diversity on campus. The results also indicated that actual experiences in the college environment play a more important role than student background in predicting perceptions of a hostile climate for diversity. Latino/a students' sense of belonging in their college environment

is crucial to social cohesion and identity as part of the college community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

The expectation of the institution is that Latino/a students may dis-identify with their college and its activities when exposed to stereotypes and assumptions, but Hurtado and Ponjuan's (2005) longitudinal study found the outcomes were not uniformly affected by student perceptions of a hostile climate. The hostile climate in this study was described as an environment with perceptions of discrimination and prejudice in the classroom, perceived racial tension on campus, being singled out in the class because of their backgrounds, and hearing faculty express stereotypes about racial/ethnic tension on campus. Latino/a students' participation in extra curricular activities, especially diverse organizations, and having a critical awareness of the racial dynamics at their college while seeking ways to change it played an important role for the students. In addition to participation, having a support network with faculty and staff gave second year Latino/as confidence and a sense of belonging (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005).

Commitment to the Institution

Tinto (2006) contends that engagement is positively related to persistence. He notes that many students discontinue their undergraduate education because they feel disconnected or are not committed to the institution. Similarly, Bean (2005) proposes that students leave when they are marginally committed to the institution. Institutional commitment is strengthened when undergraduates are actively engaged in educationally purposeful endeavors that connect them to the campus and in which they feel some sense of enduring obligation and responsibility (Bean, 2005; Tinto, 1993). The more leadership

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positions students hold, the more they are committed to their respective organizations and institutions, and are less likely to leave the institution.

The Nora Student Engagement Model (Nora & Ramirez, 2006) is a retention model that proposes six major components: (a) precollege factors, (b) institutional purpose and institutional allegiance, (c) academic and social experiences, (d) cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes, (e) goal determination/institutional allegiance, and (f) persistence. Influences of academic and environmental factors on students (e.g., campus climate, sense of belonging, or faculty interaction) lead to degree attainment. As students enter higher education, they also bring with them a sense of purpose and an allegiance to their institution of choice (Nora & Ramirez, 2006). Educational goals and commitment to enroll, participation in extra curricular activities, and graduation from a specific institution provide the student with a sense of purpose to attaining a degree at that institution (Nora & Ramirez, 2006).

The students who are more committed to their organizations or leadership positions also are committed to their goal of obtaining a degree and are more likely than their less committed peers to participate in the types of academic and social activities that provide the support they need to meet the challenges faced during the initial year of college (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Gonzalez, 2002; Nora & Ramirez, 2006). Students' commitment to their organizations is due in part to the relationships they build with the other students and the advisor. Being committed to organizations helps reassure that degree-attainment is gained through encouragement and support received in interactions with faculty and peers in both academic and social arenas. Arbona and Nora (2007) and Nora and Cabrera (1996) also found that a strong commitment toward a college degree on

the part of Latino/a students expressed as early as tenth grade played a role in their commitment to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

Paralleling Arbona and Nora's (2007) findings, Gonzalez (2002) found that aspirations for higher education for his Latino participant did not begin at an early age. Although he excelled in high school, the student had no intention of attending college until his mother encouraged him to attend a college recruitment event. In Latino culture, the mother plays a large role in the decisions children make (Gonzalez, 2002). In other words, for Latino/as, there is not an automatic commitment to the institution until the student arrives at the institution, which may be the first time on campus for them and their families. The out-of-class experience is widely influenced by Latino/a students' familial obligations (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Gonzalez, 2002; Kapp & Marr, 2002).

Commitment to Graduate

Gonzalez (2002) found that cultural nourishment led Latino/a students to graduate. Cultural nourishment from the family or a parent provides encouragement, desire, and a sense of purpose necessary to persist at the university (Torres, 2003). Another source of cultural nourishment is the Latino organizations on campus that provide the support to lead a student to graduation by giving them a sense of purpose at their institution (Gonzalez, 2002). Latino/a students who come from locations where Latino/as constitute a critical mass focus on finding others who share their values and culture at PWIs (Torres, 2003). For example, Gonzalez (2002) expressed the following surprise:

When I went to my first MECHA meeting I was blown away. I had never been in a room with so many Chicanos at the university before. I wondered where all of

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them had been during the day. It felt good to be in a room with so many Chicanos.

I felt strong. In fact, I go every week now just because of the strength I get from

being around my people. It's tough going to class and being the only Chicano. If

it weren't for MECHA, I don't know if I'd still be here. (p. 211)

According to Fry (2004), Latino/a youth are disadvantaged in their quest for a

bachelor's degree because they enroll in too many different institutions as compared to

their Anglo peers. When Latino/as transfer in and out of these institutions, they lose

credits and it takes longer overall for their degree completion. Latino/a students enroll in

so many schools because often times they start at their local community college, or

perhaps a technical school, resulting in multiple schools. Most importantly, their

experiences differ from their Anglo peers even when they enroll on the same campuses.

Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) concur that it is important to understand how Latino/as in a

four-year public university perceive their college environments in order to achieve

educational success. It is important to be mindful that some institutions admitting more

Latino/a students retain structures and practices that reflect assumptions preserving

predominantly Anglo norms (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005).

Negative attitudes held by Latino/a students are exacerbated by a lack of role

models (Johnson et al., 2007). For instance, Latino/as wonder why they should go to

college when no one in their communities, or few may have attended and graduated from

college. Although the aforementioned studies rarely mention the impact of positive role

models within the faculty, Gonzalez (2002) found that Latino/a students experienced

cultural nourishment by having a Chicano professor and/or by taking a Chicano literature

class.

Review of the Literature Summary

The population of Latino/a students entering college is increasing; yet, Latino/a students are graduating in lower numbers than their non-Latino/a peers (Fry, 2004, 2009; Hernandez & Lopez, 2005; Nevarez & Rico, 2007). Tinto's (1993) theory of integration addresses student academic and social integration, which places the responsibility on the student to integrate into the institution. The theory purports that once integrated, the student will feel part of the institution. However, several scholars (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et. al., 2007; Rendon et al., 2000; Tierney, 1992) take exception to the centrality of integration to college success, especially as it pertains to under-represented students. Tinto's (1993) theory does not place the responsibility on the institution, but on the student. Because of its explicit emphasis on practices relevant for under-represented students, Hurtado and Carter's (1997) theory of sense of belonging was used as the theoretical framework for this research. Their theory captures the view of the student and whether s/he feels a part of the college community.

Hurtado et al. (1999) believe a positive campus racial climate encourages a sense of belonging at the institution. A positive campus racial climate also encourages ongoing, cross-racial interactions, which with a diverse population, improves educational outcomes for all students (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999; Milem et al., 2005). One of the challenges PWIs face is molding the campus culture that promotes a sense of belonging and supports the goal of improving retention rates of under-represented students (Gonzalez, 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Locks et al., 2008). Gonzalez (2002) found perceptions of the campus climate likely are influenced by the students' involvement in academic and social organizations. Many of the students concur

with the idea that student involvement is important. It gives students a sense of belonging

at their institution (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tinto, 2006). Many of the studies cited have

similar commonalities regarding the obstacles Latino/a college students encounter such as

academic preparedness, campus climate issues, finances, family, and racial tension (e.g.

Gonzalez, 2002; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). A key influence on Latino/a students' sense

of belonging is their perception of racially supportive campus climates (Hurtado &

Carter, 1997). For the purpose of this research study, the researcher's focus is primarily

on campus climate issues that promote sense of belonging and how those factors

influence the perceptions of Latino/as at a PWI.

CHAPTER 3 - **Methodology**

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case qualitative study was to explore how undergraduate Latino/a students perceive the campus climate and their sense of belonging at Kansas State University. This chapter describes the methods and procedures used in the research. The discussion is organized according to the following sections: (a) overview of qualitative research design, (b) purpose of the research, (c) research questions, (d) research design and rationale, (e) researcher's role, (f) protection of human subjects, (g) pilot study and protocol development, (h) research site, (i) selection of participants, (j) data collection, (k) establishing trustworthiness, (l) data analysis, and (m) summary.

Overview of Qualitative Research Design

This study employed qualitative research. Creswell (1998) describes qualitative research as having the following characteristics: (a) study is located in a natural setting, (b) researcher is the key instrument of data collection, (c) data are collected through words and phrases, (d) data are analyzed inductively, and (e) there is a focus on participants' perception and meaning. Qualitative research is unobtrusive in nature and it necessitates that the researcher be open and flexible to change depending upon what s/he encounters in the field (Creswell, 1998). Inherent in this study is the researcher's need to explore the research questions in the natural setting of Kansas State University's campus. The researcher serves as the primary means of data collection, and the method of data

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analysis is consistent with Creswell's explication of qualitative research. (Topics are explored in later sections). Ultimately, the researcher seeks to understand the campus environment from Latino/a undergraduates' point of view.

The design of this qualitative study was incomplete at the beginning of the study. It emerged throughout the course of the study and evolved in response to insights the researcher gained in the field. Studying people in a natural context inevitably leads to unanticipated discoveries that alter the researcher's course. The qualitative researcher does not try to manage the research environment; in fact, s/he avoids this as much as possible (Guba, 1978).

Studying people in their contextual environment supports the researcher in understanding how they construct meaning in their lives (Guba, 1978). Qualitative data include participant insights, ideas, reflections, and reactions that help the investigator identify important trends and issues. Generating useful and credible qualitative findings involves observation, interviews, and content analysis of documents and requires discipline, knowledge, training, practice, creativity, and hard work (Patton, 2002).

The researcher sees reality as a flexible entity and, therefore, tries to capture a participant's reality at a given moment in time, or the subjectivity of his/her experience. Respect for the participant's perceptions is foundational to qualitative research (Guba, 1978). The qualitative researcher also identifies the values, assumptions, or biases she brings to the research and considers the impact of these throughout the study. This awareness and acknowledgement of personal values and assumptions helps the researcher ensure that the quality of the study is not undermined (Guba, 1978).

Purpose of the Research

This study sought to explore, reveal, and determine enrolled undergraduate Latino/a students' perceptions of the campus climate and sense of belonging at Kansas State University. With the growth of Latino/as in college, many institutions still retain structures and practices that reflect assumptions that preserve predominately White norms (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). Because minority students attending PWIs experience lower levels of integration and sense of belonging, yet higher levels of alienation and discrimination, it is important to research Latino/as' perceptions related to campus climate and sense of belonging (Gonzalez, 2002; Gupton et al., 2009; Harpor & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1999; Jones et al., 2002; Rankin & Reason, 2005).

Research Questions

To examine the experiences of undergraduate Latino/a students at Kansas State University, the following questions were posed:

1. How do Latino/a students perceive the campus climate at Kansas State University?

    a. How do Latino/a students perceive their university experience outside of their academic classes, e.g., student life, residence halls, and community?

    b. How do Latino/a students perceive their experience in the academic classroom?

2. What effect, if any, do Latino/a student perceptions of campus climate have on their likelihood of being retained?

   a. How do Latino/a students' perception of campus climate influence their commitment to the institution?

   b. How do Latino/a students' perception of campus climate influence their desire to graduate?

   c. How do Latino/a students' perception of campus climate influence their sense of belonging?

Research in this area is needed, in particular at PWIs (Gonzalez, 2002; Gupton et al., 2009; Harpor & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1999; Jones et al., 2002; Rankin & Reason, 2005). While there is a well-developed literature base on campus climate, research is needed to inquire about and reveal Latino/a students' sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2002).

Research Design and Rationale

A multiple case study was selected as a method to develop in depth analysis of multiple individuals. "A case study is a good approach when the researcher has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in depth understanding of the cases or comparison of several cases" (Creswell, 2006, p. 75). A multiple case study is appropriate for this research in order to explore the campus climate and undergraduate Latino/as' sense of belonging at a single site. The researcher purposefully selected multiple case study because these cases show different perspectives on the issues (Creswell, 2006). Wanting to capture the experiences of Latino/a students at Kansas State University, the researcher employed a qualitative multiple case study research design.

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Creswell (1998) describes this type of qualitative research as having the following characteristics: (a) study is located in a natural setting, (b) researcher is the key instrument of data collection, (c) data are collected through words and phrases, (d) data are analyzed inductively, and (e) there is a focus on participants' perception and meaning.

Other qualitative approaches were considered for the research design, however the multiple case study design was determined as the most relevant and appropriate for the investigation. For example, biography was not selected because there was more than one perspective the researcher wanted to capture; ethnography was not selected because the researcher was not describing and interpreting a cultural or social group; grounded theory was not selected because there was no need to develop a theory grounded in data from the field. Nor was phenomenology selected because understanding the essence of the experiences about a phenomenon was not the focus (Creswell, 1998).

Analysis of the data collected through individual interviews, the experiences of Latino/a undergraduate students at Kansas State University are described, analyzed, and interpreted. Data are analyzed to understand the effects student perceptions of campus climate have on their retention. The researcher encouraged students to speak candidly about their undergraduate experience. Students were given the opportunity to voice their opinions, feelings, and perceptions related to their experiences in and outside of class. The researcher engaged genuine, empathic interpretation of the information students communicated.

Through analysis and interpretation of the collected data, the researcher identified common themes that emerged among the participants. Following the rationale from Creswell (1998), results and conclusions of this multiple case study provide a detailed

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understanding of the Latino/a students' experiences from their point of view. The findings of this multiple case study additionally were considered in relation to other studies exploring similar experience (Eichelberger, 1989).

Researcher's Role

Clearly communicating biases is essential for qualitative investigators. Based on the researcher's ethnic background and personal and professional experiences, she believes Latino/a students will have special concerns and challenges as minority students at a PWI. Another researcher bias is the belief that there are differences between first generation and second or third generation Latino/a students. The language or academic preparedness can make a difference in their sense of belonging on a college campus. For example, college experience will be different for a student who just recently learned English as opposed to a student who was born in the U.S. and may not speak Spanish. Already knowing many of the Latino/a students on campus is another research bias. Reflexivity of the researcher is important for this reason. These biases and assumptions were considered continually throughout the course of the study, in order for all students' opinions to be heard and analyzed openly and honestly. Such reflection also is critical for ensuring that results are communicated as accurately as possible to reflect students' experiences.

The researcher understands her role in guiding the participants by asking specific and follow-up questions. From a counseling and Latina perspective, the researcher built rapport with participants to ease any potential discomfort as they discussed their perspectives of the campus climate at Kansas State University. The researcher's use of English, or Spanish, facilitated open communication with participants. Being a Latina and

having experienced education as a student in institutions of higher education, the researcher has a strong connection with the participants' stories. Nevertheless, the researcher understands that she comes to data collection knowing that the situations of Latino/as may differ.

Regardless of the exact method used, a qualitative researcher is faced with a number of issues that arise at different junctures in the research process, such as data collection, data analysis, and data sharing (Creswell 2007). Creswell (1998) and Merriam (1998) offer guidelines to maintain the ethical standards of qualitative studies. These guidelines include:

1. The researcher must protect the anonymity of the participants.

2. The researcher must treat the participants with dignity and respect.

3. The researcher must not engage in any deception about the nature of the study and must explain the purpose of the study.

4. The researcher must have written permission from the participants.

5. The researcher must present the truth when reporting the research findings.

6. The researcher must seriously consider whether or not to share personal experiences with the participants.

When appropriate, the researcher may share her personal experiences with the participants. In the Latino/a community, sharing of experiences helps participants feel at ease (Parra, 2007).

The researcher's perceptions are important. One must reflect, first on the meaning of the experience for oneself; then, one must turn outward, to those being interviewed,

and establish credibility, which tests this understanding with the participants through member checks (Creswell, 1998). Moustakas (1995) provides an insider's perspective, his own, as a type of study that distinguishes and elaborates three primary processes that contribute to the development of a relationship with participants: "Being-In," Being-For," and "Being-With":

1. "Being-In involves immersing oneself in another world: listening deeply and attentively so as to enter into the other person's experience and perception";

2. "Being-For involves taking a stand of support of the other person, being there for the other. Becoming an advocate of the person with reference to his/her frustrations";

3. "Being-With involves being present as one's own person in relation to another person, bringing one's own knowledge and experience into the relationship". (pp. 82-84)

Being in another world was the easiest process, because the researcher comes from a counseling background. Listening deeply and attentively enacted this process. The researcher is an advocate for Latino/a students on campus, so being for the students was not an issue. Because the researcher is Latina and has experienced higher education at PWIs, she understood and had previous knowledge about and experience in higher education.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher followed the guidelines for research involving human subjects regulated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Kansas State University. The IRB

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application was submitted and approved (see approval letter, Appendix B) before beginning any interviews. All participants were Latino/a undergraduate students at Kansas State University. Each participant was given a pseudonym in order to preserve confidentiality. Consent forms (Appendix C) were signed before the interviews began and are stored separately from interview data. All taped recordings are password secured in the researcher's office. These files are accessible only to the principal investigator. Computer files are stored on a stand-alone computer that is password protected. All data were coded, and the coded data are stored separately. After the completion of the study, all paper and digital files will be destroyed after three years, unless participants agree to allow their research to be kept for future publishing purposes only.

Pilot Study and Protocol Development

After receiving IRB approval, the researcher requested assistance from Latinos/as who had just graduated or would be finished within the next month. Five students generously accepted. First, the researcher developed a preliminary interview protocol (Appendix D) to explore Latino/a undergraduate students' perceptions of Kansas State University's campus climate. The interview protocol listed the questions that were explored in the course of each interview. This guide was prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each participant. The questions were general, relevant to the topic (in this case, campus climate), and designed to prompt participants' discussion of issues such as their perceptions of the campus climate in and outside of class, their perceptions of sense of belonging, and ways these perceptions related to their retention at Kansas State University. Participant responses became the basis for more specific questions, which did not need to be prepared in advance (Patton, 2002).

Second, the researcher piloted the protocol (Appendix D) with the same five volunteers who served as peer debriefers. After piloting the interview questions, the researcher took into consideration the feedback from the peer debriefers and made necessary changes to refine the interview questions. The resulting, finalized interview guide (Appendix E) was used as a framework for the actual research interviews.

Research Site

This study was conducted at a predominantly White, research-based land grant institution founded in 1858. Kansas State University is state funded with nine different academic colleges and offers over 250 undergraduate majors. Graduate students can choose from more than 100 masters, doctoral, and certificate programs. According to Kansas State University's website, during the 2008 fall semester enrollment was 23,520, and 753 students, or 3.21%, identified themselves as Latino/a. Students from all 50 states, every county in the state, and 60 different countries are represented at Kansas State University. The university graduates more than 3,500 students each year. Manhattan, the city in which Kansas State University is located, is nestled in the rolling hills of the Midwest and has a population of approximately 49,000. According to the Office of Planning and Analysis website for the university, the demographics of the fall 2008 faculty include: 1,068 Caucasian, 25 Black, 25 Hispanic, 116 Asian, and 5 American Indian. In 2001 there were 67 incoming Latino/a freshmen. The graduation rate for these students in four years was 4% and 50 of them continued to their fifth year. In their fifth year, 11.9% graduated and 44 students continued to their sixth year (http://www.k-state.edu/pa/). The majority of the Latino/a students come from southwest Kansas and the

Kansas City, Kansas area. Garden City Community College, Dodge City Community College, and Seward County Community College are the feeder community colleges.

Selection of Participants

This study focuses on the lived experiences of Latino/a undergraduates enrolled at Kansas State University from August 2008 through December 2009. Creswell (1998) recommends five to 25 individual participants for a multiple case study because qualitative research does not have a pre-determined number of participants needed for a study. According to Patton (2002), there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Patton claims that the sample size depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be most useful, what will lend credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources.

Purposeful sampling and criterion sampling were used to select participants for this research. With purposeful sampling, the researcher looks for certain traits or qualities in participants that provide rich information (Creswell, 2006; Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Purposeful sampling was used to ensure the key research themes were addressed and that diversity in every category was explored (Creswell, 2006). Purposeful sampling also was selected because the research can potentially show diverse perspectives on sense of belonging at PWIs. Criterion-sampling works best when the participants selected all have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). In this case, the researcher targeted undergraduate self-identified Latino/as at Kansas State University.

The researcher requested lists from the Registrar's Office of all enrolled Latino/a undergraduate students. This list consisted of students who met the following criteria: (a) currently enrolled full-time at Kansas State University, (b) undergraduate, and (c) self-

identified as Latino/a (on admissions application, # 4 is for Hispanic). The list provided each student's email address, gender, generation status, transfer status, and academic classification (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), which allowed the researcher to identify those with college experience. Purposeful sampling may demonstrate an array of perspectives from the different classifications, genders, and generations of Latino/a students at Kansas State University.

An email invitation to participate in the study was sent to all Latino/as that fit the criteria noted above (Appendix F). There were 639 Latino/as who received an invitation via electronic mail. The invitation email explained the participant's role and what each participant could expect from the investigation. Students had the opportunity to respond to the email indicating their willingness to volunteer for the study; 28 responded. The researcher then contacted the 28 volunteers either via email or personal phone, to explain the research process. Of the 28 volunteers, four had time conflicts, five were on the reserve list; therefore, only 19 actually participated. Five participants remained on the reserve list until data saturation was attained.

Regarding generation status, the university tracks if students are first generation. First generation refers to a student who is the first in his or her family (mother, father) to complete a college education. Family members may have attended or may be concurrently attending college, but have not yet completed either an associate's or bachelor's degree (Payne, 2007).

The researcher met with the 19 volunteers individually. During these meetings, the researcher explained the study's purpose. The researcher elaborated, noting that they were excellent candidates for the study because they met all of the study's criteria for

participants sampling: (a) currently enrolled full-time at Kansas State University, (b) undergraduate, and (c) self-identified as Latino/a. Once the 19 students agreed, the researcher followed with purposeful sampling to ensure there were ample representations from genders, transfer students and non-transfers, and classifications. Purposeful sampling further ensured different perspectives of Latino/a students, i.e., a senior may or may not have a different perspective than a sophomore; a female may feel differently than a male in an education course. There was no need to ask anyone from the reserve list.

The researcher initiated discussions with the participants to illustrate that their college experiences were worth researching and that their insights could provide information, advice, and perspectives on situations that could be helpful to the campus, other Latino/as, and other researchers. After this introductory phase, the potential participants were invited to participate in the research study and were given an informed consent before the interview began. Subsequently, the researcher collaborated with each participant to establish an interview schedule that was mutually agreeable to both parties.

Data Collection

Creswell (1998) described interviewing as a form of data collection that involves interviews ranging from semi-structured to open-ended. For this study, the researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to adapt to the participants' responses, ask for clarification, and ask follow-up questions throughout the interview (Patton, 2002). This process encouraged the participants to share openly various aspects of their experiences. Participants were asked first to read the interview guide provided by the researcher

(Appendix G), followed by the list of interview questions (Appendix E). The researcher's procedure was to conduct the semi-structured interviews, audiotape the interviews, and transcribe the interviews.

When conducting a three-step interview according to the process described by Seidman (1991), there is a focus on the participant's life history, details of experience, and reflection on meaning. Thus, during the first part of the interview, the researcher gathered information related to the participant's life history. This involved asking the participant to divulge as much information about his or her life history, within the context of the topic, that he or she felt comfortable sharing (Parra, 2007).

The second step of the interview process involved the participant sharing details of his or her experience. The researcher gathered data on the participants' lived experiences. The interviewer prepared a list of predetermined interview questions that were emailed to the participants in advance. The purpose of this step is to "concentrate on concrete details of the participants' present experience in the topic area of the study" (Seidman, 1991, p. 11). This assisted the researcher's collection of the participants' narratives needed for data analysis. Participants were asked to reconstruct details of their lived experiences in the form of stories and anecdotes as part of the interview process. The participants were given the option of having the interview conducted in English or Spanish. All selected English. Some questions/responses during the interview involved switching between the two languages, as the interconnected use of both languages is an attribute common to bilingual speakers (Parra, 2007).

The third part of the interview process involved reflection on meaning. Participants were asked to reflect upon the meaning of their experiences. As used here,

"the term meaning is not one of satisfaction or reward, although such issues may play a part in the participants' thinking; it addresses the intellectual and emotional connections" (Seidman, 1991, p. 12). Meaning making in this sense "requires that participants look at how factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation" (Seidman, 1991, p. 12).

According to Patton (2002), the guiding interview questions should be specific, carefully worded, prepared in advance, and standardized. There should be different types of questions, such as those related to experience and behavior, opinions and values, feelings, senses, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). A multiple case study such as this is less concerned with the factual status of particular instances—whether something happened, how often, or how it occurred. For example, the researcher does not ask, "How do these children learn this particular material?" but inquires about the nature of the experiences of learning (Van Manen, 1990). In this example, the goal of the researcher was to understand what this particular learning experience was like for these students (Van Manen, 1990).

Interviews for this study took place from July 2009 through September 2009. Interviews averaged 60 minutes in length. Data saturation was achieved at 19 participants, meaning the data received by the researcher was becoming repetitive. At the beginning of each interview session, the researcher stated the purpose of the study and assured the confidentiality of the participant's responses. The participants were required to read the interview guide (Appendix G).

The researcher was sensitive to the student participants during the interviews, especially regarding the way issues were addressed. Open-ended interview questions

allowed participants the opportunity to narrate their experiences and perceptions

thoroughly and comfortably. This semi-structured interview approach also allowed the

researcher the opportunity to probe for accuracy and understanding when necessary. The

researcher's goal was that participants would reconstruct their experiences in the context

of their lives and reflect on the meaning in order to articulate a full picture of their

experiences.

Each of the interviews was digitally recorded (audio) and transcribed verbatim

following each interview. The researcher documented field notes regarding the

participants' actions, hesitations, excitement, or non-verbal cues that were not present in

the audio recording. The field notes allowed the researcher to compare the notes taken for

each of the participants during the interviews and cross-reference them with the

transcribed interviews for data analysis. Through member checks, the researcher provided

the participants with the transcripts to read after the interview. Participants then were

asked to clarify their responses if needed, or if there was any part they wished to

eliminate (Parra, 2007). Only one of the participants added clarification to his/her

interview transcript.

The interviews were kept confidential and were conducted in a private studio

environment that was comfortable for both the student and researcher. Two interviews

were conducted in a public library due to convenience for the participants. The studio is

part of a resource center available to university faculty and students located on the

campus. By conducting the interviews in a studio, the researcher was able to eliminate

outside interference throughout the duration of the interview. Such a location also

enabled the researcher's use of technologically advanced audio recording equipment.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is important and defined as "the judged credibility of a qualitative research study based upon the appropriateness of the data gathering and analytical process and their resulting interpretation" (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 694). Trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is determined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These four aspects will be discussed to establish the trustworthiness of this research study.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is the counterpart of internal validity in quantitative research. Strategies to establish credibility include (a) prolonged engagement in the field, (b) peer debriefing, (c) member checks, and (d) triangulation of the data (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). The research interviews were scheduled July 2009 through September 2009, thereby constituting prolonged engagement in the field. The researcher's major professor served as the peer debriefer, keeping the researcher honest by asking hard questions about the methodology.

Member checks were addressed immediately after the researcher completed the transcriptions and emailed the transcripts to the participants for their feedback. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that member checking is "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Participants were asked to participate in member checks through reading and commenting on the accuracy of their own transcripts after the interview. Participants had the opportunity to alter any parts of the transcribed interview or accept the entire transcribed interview before the researcher began coding for emergent themes. Only one participant modified his transcription. In addition, participants were

asked for input regarding the study, data, and results. Triangulation was achieved via participants' interviews and a methodological log.

Transferability

Transferability is the equivalent of external validity in quantitative research and includes providing rich, thick description and purposeful sampling (Anfara et al., 2002). Creswell (1998) stated, "rich, thick description allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability" (p. 203). This rich description includes information about the participants and their comments in the study. To ensure transferability, the researcher provided rich descriptions of the emerging themes and categories through direct quotations from the participants' narratives. Creswell (2007) noted that such rich information allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability. In addition, the researcher supplied in depth information about the context and setting of the study, as well as the participants, to ensure further that a rich description was provided. After the initial criterion sampling to select participants, purposeful sampling determined the final research participants.

Dependability

Dependability is the counterpart to reliability in quantitative research and includes creating an audit trail, code-recode strategy, triangulation, and peer examination (Anfara et al., 2002). When researchers can provide evidence of the appropriateness of research analysis, the study has gained a satisfactory level of dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher provided a thorough explanation of the four data analyses: categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, establishing patterns and looking for similarities, and naturalistic generalizations of the data.

An audit trail was created and kept by the researcher (Appendix H). This is a log of the research process and serves to ensure dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail was a useful strategy used by the researcher for determining the trustworthiness of the qualitative inquiry. It encouraged the researcher to self-question and have a reflective attitude regarding the research process.

As delineated regarding data collection, a code-recode strategy was used. The data first were categorically aggregated and color-coded. Data then were analyzed for patterns. Once patterns were identified, data were analyzed for themes. The researcher proceeded in analysis with a constant comparative method until no more new data were identified.

Triangulation corroborates evidence from different sources (e.g., artifacts, documents, observations). One source of triangulation was among participants' stories through their shared experiences in the same context. The researcher's methodological log served as second source for triangulation and was used as a reflective and reflexive journal of sorts, and along with the researcher's thoughts after interviews. Triangulation encouraged the researcher to develop an accurate and credible report (Creswell, 2002). Triangulation of data provided evidence from two different sources to shed light on emerging themes (Anfara et al., 2002; Patton, 2002). Peer examination was done by the researcher's co-major professor.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research is the equivalent of objectivity in quantitative research and includes triangulation of data and the researcher practicing reflexivity (Anafara et al., 2002). Confirmability shows that the data and the conclusions

drawn from the study are logical. Reflexivity is the acknowledgement of the researcher that her actions and decisions will inevitably impact the meaning and context of the experiences under investigation (Horsburgh, 2003). In practicing reflexivity, the researcher examined the power relationship between the researcher and the participants. If the researcher is in a position of power over a participant, the findings could be inaccurate. The researcher was objective and did not verbally relate to the participants to ensure reflexivity. The researcher "came clean" in stating her perspective and biases.

The audit trail (Appendix H), or log of the research process, served as one source for triangulation of the data and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail was a useful strategy for the researcher to determine the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry. It encouraged the researcher to self-question and have a reflective attitude regarding the research process. The peer debriefers assured trustworthiness of the data analysis.

Creswell (1998) believes confirmability is achieved through peer debriefing, which "provides an external check of the research process" (p. 202). The peer debriefer's role is to serve as the "devil's advocate," which keeps the researcher honest by asking hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was accomplished by the co-major advisor questioning the research process continuously and recommending the researcher to keep an audit trail or log of the process.

Data Analysis

A detailed description of the multiple case study and its setting is advocated by Creswell (1998). The researcher incorporated the four forms of data analysis and interpretation into the study. The first form was *categorical aggregation* in which the researcher sought a collection of instances from the data with expectations of emergent relevant themes. The researcher identified and listed statements of meanings for individuals. Creswell (1998) recommends providing "a detailed view of aspects about the case—the facts" (p. 157), which was incorporated because doing so assisted the researcher in color coding the data into categories according to the similarities of the content of the interviews. The researcher highlighted reoccurring words such as, family, mom, or in-class experiences.

The second form of data analysis and interpretation is *direct interpretation*. The researcher interpreted or drew a meaning from a single instance without looking for other instances. Creswell (1998) describes this as essential to the "process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways" (p. 154). This is where the researcher developed a description of, "what happened," as well as a structural description, "how" the experience was perceived. The researcher had to put the pieces of information about the in-class experiences and draw a conclusion as to how their class experiences were.

The third form of data analysis involved establishing patterns and looking for similarities and/or correspondence between two or more categories. This correspondence took shape in the form of a matrix, a four-by-four grid, showing the relationships among categories. The participants' statements were classified according to in-and out-of-the

classroom experiences as well as their commitment to Kansas State University, and sense of belonging. This facilitated identification of any similar reasons for the participants' perceptions of campus climate. The similarities in this data analysis occurred mostly in the feelings about the residence halls, mutual feelings about their family, or their mother.

Finally, the fourth form of data analysis involved the development of naturalistic generalizations from the data analysis. These generalizations may help other researchers learn from the proposed study as well as develop studies for similar populations. The generalization was made that Latinos/as were influenced more so by their mothers than the institution. Another generalization was that religion was not as important to some of the participants as it was for one of the females.

The in depth interviews proceeded until no new emerging themes resulted from the interview data, which results in data saturation. In this approach, the researcher deliberately searched for extreme variations of each concept in the data to exhaustion (Guest, Bunce, & Mannyson, 2006). Creswell (1998) described this process, stating that the researcher's goal is "to collect interview data until no more can be found" (p. 56). This process of continually comparing collected data to emergent categories is called the "constant comparative method" of data analysis (Creswell, 1998, p. 57). The participants towards the end of the interviews were repeating reoccurring words or expressions already heard by other participants. No new themes were emerging in the interviews.

Summary

This research sought to capture the lived experiences of Latino/a students at Kansas State University through a qualitative multiple case study research design. The theoretical framework was Hurtado and Carter's (1997) sense of belonging, which specifically relates to Latino/as. This research is significant because more research is needed about Latino/as' experiences, campus climate, and sense of belonging at PWIs (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, 2007; Jones et al., 2002).

The researcher intentionally interviewed 19 participants until common themes emerged. In depth interviews took place from July 2009 through September 2009. Member checks were conducted with the participants to check for accuracy before the researcher coded the transcripts. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability ensured trustworthiness through prolonged engagement in the field, peer debriefing, triangulation, member checks, rich thick description, purposeful sampling, creating an audit trail, using a code-recode strategy, and through practicing reflexivity. The findings are shared in Chapter Four and are presented through narratives representing the emerging themes and tables with descriptive demographic information gathered about the participants.

CHAPTER 4 - **Results**

I think that people at Kansas State University don't understand tolerance and acceptance of Latinos [Spanish natives]. They say my name as Guan or get on my case because I say "Leevenworth instead of Leavenworth." They don't have to accept everything about me, but tolerate me because we share the same space. It's not like when I am home, I can breathe at ease and speak broken English without being made fun of. (Juan, Sophomore)

Chapter Four presents the results of the research regarding the sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and perceptions of campus climate for 19 Latino/a students at Kansas State University. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section addresses aggregate demographic data with descriptive details from the 19 participants. The last section presents the findings of the study and analysis. The findings are organized around the research questions and the emerging themes.

Each participant took part in an in depth interview averaging 60 minutes. All but two interviews took place in a private studio at Kansas State University. Two interviews took place at a public library private room. The researcher conducted all interviews represented in this study. In order to facilitate and provide consistency, the interviews followed a predetermined set of questions (see Appendix E).

Demographic Information

The demographic data for each participant were collected at the time of the individual interviews and through email. There were 19 participants in this qualitative

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multiple case study. All were Latino/a high school graduates now attending Kansas State University. Their average age is 22 years old. When establishing birth order, it was discovered 11 participants are the oldest siblings in the family, five are the youngest, one is the second oldest, one is second to the youngest, and one is an only child. The largest family consisted of 17 siblings.

All participants are bilingual with Spanish as their native language except for two who do not speak Spanish. Two speak French as well as Spanish and English. Six participants transferred from a local community college in their hometown, while 13 came directly as freshmen to Kansas State University. Sixteen of the 19 participants were born in the United States; three are immigrant males; two are from Mexico; and one is from Brazil. All learned English in the United States. The youngest immigrant was six yeas old when he came to southwest Kansas from Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico. The other undocumented student was 11 when he moved to Kansas from Mexico City, Mexico. The oldest undocumented student was 15 when he moved to Kansas from Brazil.

All but two participants are first generation students. Eight of the participants are from a single parent household. Eleven participants live with both parents in the household. Fourteen participants received free or reduced lunches while in high school. Their parents' occupations range from a medical doctor to meatpacking workers. The participants work both on-campus and off-campus jobs ranging from as few as four hours per week to as much as 40 hours per week. One participant was self-employed, working 20 hours a week.

The university academic standing of the 19 participants includes five seniors, six juniors, seven sophomores, and one freshman. Their academic majors vary with eight in education, one in graphic design, three in engineering, four in social sciences, two in architecture, and one in pre-veterinary medicine. The average self-reported grade point average of the 19 participants is 3.09 on a 4.0 scale. The freshman's grade point average (GPA) for his/her first semester was 2.846. All grade point averages were self-reported, with the exception of the first time freshmen. The researcher sought his GPA on the student information system with his permission.

The demographic details for the participants are presented in Tables 4.1 through 4.5. Participants were grouped in the respective tables according to gender and age, or similar age range. Presenting the information in several tables facilitates clarity in describing the participants' characteristics.

Table 4.1 presents demographic details for four of the Latino participants who are 22 years of age. Of the four, one was born in the United States, whereas two were raised in Mexico. All are upperclassmen with a GPA above 3.0, representing two education majors, one graphic designer, and one in construction science. All speak Spanish and Manny speaks French. Humberto was the only transfer student from Garden City Community College. Humberto and Manny are first generation students and they, along with Fernando, received free or reduced lunch while in high school. Fernando is the only one who does not work, while Humberto works the most at 40 hours/week. All four participants come from a two-parent household. Humberto was from a single parent household until his mother recently married.

Table 4.1 *Demographic Information for Four 22-Year-Old Latino Participants*

	Fernando	Martin	Humberto	Manny
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	22	22	22	22
Birth order	Youngest	Oldest	Oldest	Oldest
Birth place	Brazil	Missouri	Guadalajera	Mexico City
Raised	Brazil	Kansas	Mexico/KS	Mexico
Length living in KS	6-7 years	22 years	16 years	11 years
High School Attended	Kansas City	Shawnee Mission	Garden City	Ulysses
Previous Residency	Brazil	N/A	Guadalajara	Ulysses
Academic Standing	Senior	Senior	Junior	Senior
Academic Major	Education	Education	Graphic Design	Const. Science
Grade point average	3.0	3.8	3.5	3.0
Languages	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish/French
Transfer	No	No	Yes	No
If so from where?	N/A	N/A	GCCC	N/A
First Generation	No	No	Yes	Yes
Free or reduced lunch in high school	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
(Mom) occupation (Dad) occupation	(D) Business owner	(M) & (D) Professionals	(M) Sales clerk	(D) Grain elevator manager
Single Parent household	No	No	No	No
Do you work? Hours/wk?	No	4 hrs/wk	40 hrs/wk	17 hrs/wk

Table 4.2 presents demographic information for four 18-20 year-old Latina participants. Two are the youngest in their family and three are from out of state. One Latina is from a city in the southwest part of the state. All are graduates from a Midwestern high school. Their majors are architecture, family and consumer science, psychology, and education and they are either sophomores or juniors. Two have 3.0 GPAs and two have GPAs above 3.0. All speak Spanish. One transferred to Kansas State University. All are first generation Latinas and all received free or reduced lunch in high school. Two of the four come from single parent households and all of them work.

Table 4.2 *Demographic Information for Four 18-20 Year-Old Latina Participants*

	Carmen	Trinities	Karina	Esperanza
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	19	18	20	20
Birth order	Youngest	2nd oldest	Youngest	2nd youngest of 17
Birth place	California	California	Wyoming	Kansas
Raised	Nebraska	California	Wyoming	Kansas
Length living in KS	6 years	8 years	7 years	N/A
High School attended	DCHS	GCHS	Eudora	SW Heights
Previous Residency	Nebraska	CA	N/A	N/A
Academic Standing	Sophomore	Sophomore	Junior	Junior
Academic Major	Architecture	FACSED	Psychology	Education
Grade point average	3.0	3.0	3.4	3.0
Languages	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Transfer	No	No	No	Yes
If so from where?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Southwest CC
First Generation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free or reduced lunch in high school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
(Mom) occupation (Dad) occupation	(D) Meat packing (M) n/a	(D) Dairy (M) n/a	(D) Insurance agent (M) n/a	No response
Single Parent Household	No	Yes	Yes	No
Do you work? Hours/wk?	10 hrs/wk	15 hrs/wk	4 hrs/wk	10-15 hrs/wk

Table 4.3 presents demographic information for five 18-21 year-old Latino participants. Juan is the youngest in birth order. All but Gabriel were born out of state. Juan moved recently from California to Kansas. Their majors are chemical engineering, pre-veterinary medicine, education, human ecology, and biochemistry/nutrition. Two are juniors, two are sophomores, and one is a freshman. All speak Spanish and Frank also speaks French. Enrique and Juan transferred from a junior college. Juan is the only one not classified as a first generation student and his mother is the only parent with a formal

education. The others' parents are in maintenance and meat packing industries. All

received free or reduced lunch and all work over 15 hours per week.

Table 4.3 *Demographic Information for 18-21 Year-Old Latino Participants*

	Frank	Juan Manuel	Enrique	Juan	Gabriel
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	20	18	21	20	19
Birth order	Oldest of 4	Oldest 0f 2	Oldest	Youngest	Oldest
Birth place	Missouri	North Carolina	California	California	Kansas
Raised	Kansas	Kansas	Kansas	California	Kansas
Length living in KS	20 yrs	14 yrs	18 yrs	1yr	19 yrs
High School Attended	Sumner Academy	Garden City	Deerfield	California	Dodge City
Previous Residency	Kansas	North Carolina	California	California	N/A
Academic Standing	Junior	Freshmen	Junior	Sophomore	Sophomore
Academic Major	Chem. Engineer	Pre-Vet	Education	Human Ecology	Biochem/ nutrition
Grade point average	2.7	2.8	3.8	2.3	2.7
Languages	Spanish/French	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Transfer	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
If so from where?	N/A	N/A	Garden City	California	N/A
First Generation	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Free or reduced lunch in high school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
(Mom) occupation (Dad) occupation	(D) Maintenance (M) n/a	(D & M) Meat packing	(D & M) Meat packing	(D) n/a (M) Teacher	(D) Meatpacking (M) H&R
Single Parent Household	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Do you work? Hours/wk?	15 hrs/wk	25 hrs/wk	25 hrs/wk	20 hrs/wk	25-30 hrs/wk

Table 4.4 presents demographic information for three 24-35 year-old Latina

participants. All are all the oldest siblings in their families. Only Juanita was born and

raised in Kansas, whereas Lusi and Graciela are from out of state. All three are majoring

in the social sciences and have GPAs of 3.1 and above. Both Lusi and Graciela speak

Spanish, while Juanita does not. All three participants are first generation students.

Juanita and Graciela are both single parents and full time college students, while working near full-time jobs.

Table 4.4 *Demographic Information for 24-35 Year-Old Latina Participants*

	Juanita	Lusi	Graciela
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Age	30	35	24
Birth order	Oldest	Oldest	Oldest
Birth place	Kansas	Puerto Rico	California
Raised	Kansas	Puerto Rico	California
Length living in KS	N/A	17 yrs	6 yrs
High School Attended	Kansas	Puerto Rico	California
Previous Residency	Kansas	Puerto Rico	California
Academic Standing	Sophomore	Sophomore	Junior
Academic Major	Anthropology	Education	Social Science
Grade point average	3.3	3.6	3.1
Languages	No	Spanish	Spanish
Transfer	Yes	No	Yes
If so from where?	N/A	N/A	California
First Generation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free or reduced lunch in high school	Yes	No	Yes
(Mom) occupation (Dad) occupation	(D) Avionics (M) retail mngr	N/A	(D) Truck driver
Single Parent Household	Yes	No	No
Do you work? Hours/wk?	30-40 hrs/wk	20hrs/wk	Yes

Table 4.5 presents demographic information for three 24-27 year-old Latino participants. All three were raised in Kansas and graduated from a Kansas high school. Antonio's major is psychology, Ramon's is architecture, and Nolan's is family and consumer sciences. Their self-reported cumulative GPAs range from 2.7-3.0. Nolan is the only one who does not speak Spanish and Antonio is the only transfer student. All are first generation students and only Antonio and Ramon received free or reduced lunch.

None of these participants come from a single parent household. All of the participants in Table 4.5 work.

Table 4.5 *Demographic Information for 24-27 Year-Old Latino Participants*

	Antonio	Ramon	Nolan
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Age	27	24	27
Birth order	Youngest	Oldest of 4	Only child
Birth place	Illinois	Kansas	Kansas
Raised	Kansas	Kansas	Kansas
Length living in KS	22 yrs	Birth	2 7yrs
High School Attended	Illinois	Liberal	Maize
Previous Residency	Illinois	Kansas	N/A
Academic Standing	Senior	Sophomore	Senior
Academic Major	Psychology	Architecture	FACED
Grade point average	3.0	2.8	2.7
Languages	Spanish	Spanish	No
Transfer	Yes	No	No
If so from where?	Garden City	N/A	N/A
First Generation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free or reduced lunch in high school	Yes	Yes	No
(Mom) occupation (Dad) occupation	(D) n/a (M) Social services	No response	(D) Construction (M) Ag
Single Parent Household	No	No	No
Do you work? Hours/wk?	12 hours/week	Yes	40 hours/week

Emerging Themes

Prominent themes that emerged from the participants' interviews and data analysis were (a) Latino/a student identity: quien soy, who am I?, (b) Mi Casa es su Casa, (c) mi familia away from home, (d) class size matters, (e) importance of interaction and learning relationships, (f) overall fairness in the classroom environment, (g) faculty-student interaction, (h) academic advising concerns, (i) commitment to the university, (j)

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mothers' influence, (k) desire to graduate, (l) because familia matters most, and (m) sense of belonging. Each of these themes is presented and analyzed in turn.

Latino/a Student Identity: quien soy, who am I?

The Latino/a students interviewed described an array of perspectives dealing with Kansas State University and its campus climate overall. Many had experiences living in a heavily populated Latino/a community and going to schools with large numbers of Latino/a students. Moving to a Midwestern town to attend college was a culture shock for many; they felt they were experiencing two extremes. Esperanza expressed her initial thoughts,

> For us it is a culture shock and for other people as well. The majority is monolingual here. I came from a school that was half and half, so I am somewhat comfortable interacting with other students of different race, but at the same time since I know they don't have that interaction with other races, I first block myself out and like observe the person to see if they are going to be respectful of me or if they want to get to know me. I don't get too personal. To them it may be the same way. If they aren't used to interacting with students of different race, they wonder how she is, from the ghetto...LOL [Laughing out loud]. They need to get to know you (you know approve of you) before they actually talk to you.

Enrique explained, "In Jardin there are a lot of Latinos. Here the majority is Caucasian. Whenever I do see a Latino, I am like . . . oh wow there is a Latino, and get all excited." They shared how exciting it was to see another Latino/a on campus and how proud it made them feel to be Latino/a.

Fifteen of the nineteen participants, 79%, expressed their excitement of seeing other Latino/a students on Kansas State University's campus. This does not indicate the participants struggled interacting or meeting new students of other races. Their excitement was in hearing Spanish being spoken or meeting other students that looked like them. Because they were raised in predominately Latino communities, coming to Kansas State University was a culture shock for them. This made their discovery of others like them important for their identity.

How Do Latino/a Students Perceive Their University Experience Outside of Their Academic Classes?

Mi Casa es su Casa

The students interviewed had experiences living off and on campus, having roommates, or living alone. A few commuted from their family home nearby. The choice to live in the dorms was decided by the scholarship some of the students received that resulted in or required living in cohorts. Most of the students shared positive experiences of living on campus, especially about their social interactions with others, residence hall activities, and the job opportunities in the residence halls. Many of the students had a faculty or staff mentor or an organization advisor with whom they felt most connected, which aligns with the research (Gonzalez, 2002).

Jones et al. (2002), Rankin and Reason (2005), and Harpor and Hurtado (2007) found that minority students feel their campus climate as more racist and less accepting than their Anglo peers. Similarly, Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that the perceptions of racial hostility had negative effects on Latino/a students' sense of belonging, or not

fitting in. Several of the examples in the study parallel these research findings. For example, Enrique lived in the residence halls his first year and felt it welcoming because he was placed on a floor with residents from different ethnicities. But when he went to a different floor, he experienced not fitting in or an uncomfortable feeling because of his race. Residents on his floor acted like he did not belong there and it was not a welcoming environment. Although Enrique claimed it did not bother him, he returned to his original floor, thereby indicating it did bother him because he chose to move back to his old floor.

During the Bilingual Education Students Interacting to Obtain Success (BESITOS) first year and some of their second year, they are required to live in the residence halls in cohorts. For Esperanza and Maria this was very supportive because they bonded with the other Latinas in their scholarship program. Antonio's experiences were different,

> I live off campus because of the independence and freedom. I did stay in the dorms and I liked it because you were surrounded by other students. But at the same time being a minority it was like you were alone still, because you had no one else that you could identify with.

Carmen described her experiences in the residence halls positively:

> I live in A'Mharee Hall. I am very excited that we have international students this year. I feel like it's a lot more comfortable than last year. Last year I was in Kailee Hall and it had primarily Caucasian residents, so it was a little intimidating coming from Aaliyah's where the majority is Latino. I felt like I was sticking out last year. I feel more comfortable in A'Mharee Hall. It was just the feeling of not having someone you could go to who would understand you . . . like talking about

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Mexican food and speaking Spanish.

Frank's experience living in the residence halls was a different experience than Carmen and Antonio's, Frank states:

I live in the dorms because I know a lot of people from the dorms. We all know each other and get together. A lot of people from my class live in the dorms so we get together and do homework. I don't feel any unfairness. You do stick out but not a lot of people know who you are. I feel like I can just blend into the crowd.

Gabriel's experience resembled many college students' experience:

Living in the dorms especially with a bunch of kids your age you want to stay up all night and hang out. I did that a lot so my grades suffered because I would be in class falling asleep. I miss my mom's cooking. Dorm food is alright but it's not the best.

A few students felt living off campus was better because of the food. They could bring their ethnic foods from home and cook them while inviting friends over for dinner, building the camaraderie among them. The dorm food was not appealing to them and caused them to miss Latin foods. Living in this city was not always comfortable. Nolan lived off campus and shared that his landlord was an elderly Anglo woman who always came only to check on and pester him. He noted that she never checked on the Anglo girls upstairs even though they were the ones always having parties and drinking until all hours of night.

Trinicia's off campus housing included living with her younger sibling. She indicated,

Right now I brought my brother up here and I'm renting a house with two bedrooms. In the dorms, the only problem there was during the presidential elections. There were a lot of arguments in the dorms and a lot of racial remarks people putting up signs on the doors about race and other people disagreeing with that. So it was like they needed to respect that like other people's property and they didn't.   It was a big conflict during the presidential elections because it was a different color person being elected. It was very uncomfortable. I used to go to the diversity meetings that they had in the dorm. The person in charge brought their opinions to the meeting, instead of listening to others, and it was a big conflict. Everybody was so upset that they were looking down. It was ridiculous because you think they would be more open-minded but there is some out there.

Table 4.6 presents the participants' common issues that resulted for those living in residence halls at Kansas State University. Participants who lived in a residence hall included Enrique, Esperanza, Maria, Antonio, Carmen, Frank, and Gabriel.

Table 4.6 *Participants' Common Issues About Living in Residence Halls*

Racial tension	Other halls more comfortable	Intimidating coming from southwest Kansas
Sticking out like a sore thumb	Discomfort during diversity discussions	Disrespect for international students
Food choices	Diversity or lack of results in conflict	Trained mediators needed if diversity is topic
Not fitting in	Assimilating to try to fit in	Great place to meet people, study groups

Humberto, Martin, Enrique, and Manny experienced another uncomfortable situation. They were very bothered when there was a stereotypic graphic of a Mexican and an article about Mexicans bringing diseases to the United States in the campus newspaper. Humberto indicated that was the worst thing he had witnessed while being at

Kansas State University. He claimed it was upsetting because it created a "watch out for Mexicans" expression at school. Yet, he noted, no one complained about the Mexican construction workers fixing the streets or building homes. What was more upsetting to him was that he felt the administration ignored it because of freedom of speech. Conversely, Antonio was not bothered by the incident and did not allow it to take up his time.

Participants had mixed feelings outside their classrooms. For example, in the residence halls, most students felt discomfort discussing diversity issues and did not think the residential life staff were trained to be facilitators for such a sensitive topic. Students noticed disrespect for international students and fitting in with these groups of students. It was an intimidating experience for some of the participants who came from the southwest part of the state where the majority of the students in their high schools were Latino/a. One participant found himself assimilating trying to fit in with the other residents. Although comfortable for a couple of the participants, for several others it was not.

Mi Familia Away From Home

Research indicates that universities' cultural centers were known as Latino/a students' "home away from home" (Gonzales, 2002, p. 212; Jones et al., 2002, p. 30; Torres, 2003, p. 7). Major institutions such as Yale, Purdue, and Stanford have cultural centers. Cultural centers on Purdue's campus provide support systems for students of similar cultural backgrounds, but they also function as liaisons with the campus and as educational centers that benefit all students (Pierson, 2009). Research shows the cultural center is a place Latino/a students could go when they were tired of dealing with the "White world" (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 212). Hurtado and Carter's (1997) findings were

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similar for Latino/a students who attended PWIs. Feeling at home in the campus community was associated with maintaining interactions both within and outside the college community.

Many of the participants' thoughts resonated with Pierson's (2009) research. They found a community on campus in which they feel most comfortable; it is like their family away from home. For example, other activities and involvement that helped students make important connections included Education Ambassadors, Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO), Developing Scholars Program (DSP), and Bilingual Education Students Interacting to Obtain Success (BESITOS). These were the most influential for students in having a sense of belonging to the institution.

Student positive engagement to the group was further commitment to the institution. For example, Esperanza, Enrique, Lusi, Fernando, and Trinicia feel strongly that BESITOS is their major support group on campus. This group is their home away from home. Their advisor is a mentor and many see him as an uncle or a family member. They were recruited to be in the BESITOS scholarship program and felt it was because of this program they are still at the institution. Martin and Antonio spoke highly about their sense of belonging at the institution due to the Developing Scholars Program. Their advisor has been a significant support person for them. She also is the advisor for the young men's Latino fraternity. Sigma Lamda Beta Incorporated, a Latino fraternity, serves as another home away from home, a support group, and brotherhood. Most of the students were involved in HALO and once again used HALO as a means to reconnect with their culture, foods, activities, and friendship.

Antonio emphasized his sense of belonging to groups:

I am in the Developing Scholars program which is tied in the with the Bridges

program. Because of that when I was in the residence halls they automatically

pair us up with other students of the same background or majors. Through that

yeah I would say I did make friends, but I also feel most comfortable with them as

well. Most of my friends that I have made up here were through DSP or Bridges.

Most of them would be minorities. I have to say it is more with Latinos or

Hispanics. I am also heavily involved in HALO. I go to the LULAC Functions

and meetings.

Trinicia also was positive about her engagement,

I am in the organization BESITOS so I feel like they are a part of a family. I feel

very comfortable with them and a lot of the Latino organizations. I feel supported.

It's good to know that there are more Latinos here. The majority is White people.

Conversely, Manny felt comfortable with any group,

I feel comfortable with everyone. I was involved in HALO for a little bit but then

conflicts of schedules happened. I was part of Society of Hispanic Professional

Engineers but there was also a conflict of schedule. Now I am in Sigma Lambda

Chi. It is an honor society for engineers.

Table 4.7 presents the student organizations on campus that impacted the

participants where they felt like family and received the support needed to feel a sense of

belonging at Kansas State University. Several of the participants held leadership positions

and participated in multiple organizations.

Table 4.7 *Most Influential Organizations for Latino/a Students at Kansas State University*

BESITOS	HALO	DSP/Bridges	Sigma Lambda Beta
Esperanza, Enrique, Lusi, Fernando, and Trinicia	Humberto, Enrique, Gabriel, Antonio, Manny, and Elijah	Martin & Antonio	Humberto, Martin, and Gabriel

Many of the participants' hometowns are in the southwestern part of the state, where Latinos are becoming the majority. Because of their near-majority status in their communities, announcements at Wal-Mart are in Spanish; there are many Latino stores; and in one city there have been several Latino mayors. Esperanza was concerned because students may wonder if she came from the "ghetto." Although she knew she needed to come to Kansas State University for her education, she felt she did not belong at Kansas State University. She felt this way because she speaks with an accent and stands out in a predominantly White community. Although she did not feel she belonged at this campus, she made good friends here and found herself being considered "different and being told she was being too White" by her Latino/a friends back home. She did not end up like her friends in her hometown who were working in the beef packing plant. She wanted a better life, but at what cost? She was determined not to lose her culture, but yearns to be a part of the institution. Despite her discomfort in the mostly all White organizations to which she belongs, she is Latina and proud of it.

The Catholic Church community also was influential in the participants' sense of belonging in the community. Four of the students, Esperanza, Humberto, Manny, and Antonio, felt religion was instilled in them since they were little. Now at college, it was normal to attend mass. However, for Martin and Fernando it was not as important.

Although religion was instilled in Manny since birth, he only recently began attending mass. For Esperanza, her Christian church community was very influential in her sense of belonging to the community.

Although there is not a cultural center at Kansas State University, there is a Multicultural Center that none of the participants mentioned. Instead, they mentioned their organizations as their home away from home. Organizations most mentioned were: Hispanic American Leadership Organization, Developing Scholars, and Bicultural Education Students Interacting to Obtain Success. Being a part of the student organizations was influential for students in having a sense of belonging to the institution. They also found these organizations as their major source of support. They saw their advisors as family members. Even though some of the participants came from a Latino community in their hometowns, they felt like a community in their organizations.

How Do Latino/a Students Perceive Their Experiences in the Academic Classroom?

Class Size Matters

When participants were asked about the classroom environments and interactions that they experienced, they concentrated on a number of issues. Class size was a consistent concern. The larger classes were more difficult to engage in discussions with the professor and other students. Large classes allowed few opportunities to get to know other students. Differences were noted regarding core course atmosphere, large lecture atmosphere, and the atmosphere of course work taken in the academic major. Participants

shared their views about large lecture environments, their attitudes, and the poor level of

engagement inherent in a large lecture setting.

Esperanza explained:

I really don't like lecture classes because there is minimal interaction with

students and the instructor. I prefer recitation classes. There is more interaction

with students, unless you are anti-social and choose not to engage in

conversations with other students. In degree-oriented courses, it is easier to meet

people, or set up study groups because we are all interested in the same subject. It

works to my advantage because I never know when I am going to need help from

my peers.

Juan echoed Esperanza's feelings:

In the larger lecture studies, I don't feel part of the class I'm just another number,

and I just feel like I am there to listen, take notes. In the smaller classes, I have

more interaction with the professor and am more noticeable. For example, in a

small class we had to do an exercise on White Privilege. Well a black girl and me

had to sit in the back while everyone else sat in the front. The small class setting

made it uncomfortable for me because I was noticeable and I didn't want people

feeling sorry for me for not being privileged like the ones in the front.

This participant felt singled out and like a number. This exemplifies poor

conceptualization, implementation, and lack of knowledge and understanding by the

professor. There were raw emotions from the Latino student and absolutely nothing was

learned. In fact, it was humiliating for the under-represented students to be singled out in

that manner. This approach is damaging and White Privilege never should have been

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attempted to be demonstrated in this way. There is enough White privilege going around that many better and more appropriate examples could have been used.

Humberto described his class experience as, "Sometimes I do feel a part of the class and sometimes I don't. It is weird because I am the only Hispanic there. I was just in a class and realized that I was the only Latino."

Frank described his in class experience as, "There is sometimes where you have a teacher who you don't know. So sometimes they give you a look wondering if you understand the language. But most faculty treat me as family."

Latino/a students described generally positive comfort levels interacting with students in the classroom setting. Humberto described dealing with his discomfort in class, "I sit in the front of that class so I can't really turn around and talk to anybody."

Juanita, on the other hand, described her situation as:

I feel like I am a part of my classes. For me I guess there are a lot of reasons why I could feel uncomfortable being a nontraditional student. I am in a progressive sorority, LGBT Students, and I am an activist and loud. Sometimes I feel unwelcomed but I don't think it is because I am Latino. I also realize that there are a lot of misconceptions about Latino students and I realize that is where it is coming from.

The institution cannot monitor what goes on in the classroom; however, all students should feel comfortable going to class. Faculty should have effective diversity sensitivity training or they should have the common sense not to single out under-represented students in the class. Smaller class sizes may increase the possibility for the occurrence of these types of instances.

The Importance of Interaction and Learning Relationships

Student participants at times felt the development of relationships in smaller size classes were more of a progression, depending upon the teaching strategies the professor utilized, as well as the opportunities for hands-on help and attention from the professor. Once the students entered their professional classes, the classes were smaller and more intimate. Small group work was mentioned as one way professors have to facilitate interaction among students. The students' perceived level of teacher involvement and creativity was an important factor addressed by the participants. Sometimes students were alienated by lack of academic support regarding assignments. Juanita described her anthropology class,

> Occasionally, I have been working with a group of people on a group project and somebody will make a comment about a black or Asian student and I am sitting right there. And it makes me wonder what they say about me when I am not sitting there.

For many students, coursework in their academic major made the difference. Ramon shared the wonderful experience he had in the architecture program:

> I guess sometimes I had some instructors, I don't know if it was some kind of a scare tactic or hey this class is going to be this and that, that might have something to do with whether or not I approach him, but he does it to the whole class. Once you talk to them and warm up to them, they are not really like that one on one. I felt respected by the other students and the professors. I feel like I was kind of leading the group. I felt there was no problem with me being Latino.

The thoughts students shared also illustrated the differences that existed among the academic programs. A number of students discussed the change they felt in quality of the class interactions as they moved beyond their first year experience. "I think the classes that have more interaction within classmates are those classes that are geared toward your degree, like education. In those classes, you do interact more with the students because we have the same interest," Esperanza explained. As Fernando noted, "In my education professional courses, there is a lot of interaction because we are paired up in cohorts and we team teach. So it is a lot more personal than in my general education classes." A student enrolled through one college noted a more informal connection with professors. The professors and the students called each other by first names. Nevertheless, she did not feel that same comfort level approaching faculty from the different colleges. A greater comfort level, at times, was noted in terms of approaching teaching assistants.

Karina had mixed feelings. She said, "I am very comfy. I like to learn about other people and want to meet others." She was using her opportunity in class to learn from others and about her own biases. Contrasting her thoughts, she continued,

I think sometimes some students treat international students differently. The Anglo students I know laugh at them because they don't understand, are rude when asked for directions, are less patient to accommodate for them, which also annoys me because they still need help and are not proficient in the language.

Gabriel is quite frank when expressing his reason for attending class:

We listen to the professor lecture and I rarely interact with anyone in my class. I don't feel the need to, I am here to get my education . . . I save interactions with

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people for outside of the class. I am pretty comfortable interacting with students

of any race.

The participants felt once they were in the professional courses for their degree, it

was more personable and the smaller class size made a difference in their sense of

belonging. In the general education courses, the classes often are large and there is little

interaction. The jokes said in classes about under-represented students were disturbing,

making the students wonder what the White students said about them when they were not

present.

Overall Fairness in the Classroom Environment

Students shared the characteristics of the interactions that occurred between

faculty and students during classes, as well as their one-on-one experiences with faculty

beyond the classroom setting. Regardless of the size of the environment, most students

noted a sense of overall fairness in the classroom. Most interactions in classes were

described as questions and answers about the course material. Students sitting in the

"front row" were seen as the most involved in large lecture settings. Students noted the

use of teaching assistants in larger classes and a specific difference in their more positive

level of connection with faculty in smaller seminar-type or upper level courses.

Martin commented that "most all of the professors interact and work well with

students." He seemed to characterize the general feeling among students. Students

described situations in which faculty went above and beyond expectations to help them.

Juan described some of his professors:

My professors are very respectful. One professor was very fair about his grading

and open to discussion and he was one of my favorite professors and I liked

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talking to him, talking to him the most, he was just good listener, provided really good feedback on almost anything. Overall, I feel comfortable around all my professors.

The levels of effort, openness, and enthusiasm by both professors and students emerged as critical links to the quality of students' experiences. Instructors teaching smaller classes also were seen as taking more responsibility for connections with students. Students did not always feel that the first step in making a connection was up to them. Esperanza felt, "the profs in small class know our names. In large classes, the professors only remember our opinions." In large classes, the students felt it was up to them to connect with the professor, but also noted an understanding of the challenges of faculty teaching so many students. They did not expect the professors to remember their name or offer too much help outside of class. Students also perceived a wide range of quality regarding teaching skill among professors and teaching assistants and about how the level of such skill affected their learning experience. One student discussed her concern regarding a professor's teaching ability. Lusi expressed,

When it comes to fairness in the classroom, I had a teacher who believed females are superior to males so she wouldn't give the males the opportunity to express themselves in the classroom. Some are better than others. Some make you feel more comfortable. I think some of them the bigger the title the more they think that we should talk to them. But others make you feel like you have been their friends for years. I have felt respected in the class by the faculty. It helps that I always participate.

Tinto's (1987, 1993) theory places the responsibility on the students to engage

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and interact with the professors. If the students take the initiative and engage in class

discussions or student organizations, they will have a stronger sense of academic and

social integration. This is partially true; however, this mindset allows for minimal, if any,

responsibility on the faculty to take the initiative to engage and interact with their

students. Hurtado and Carter's (1997) theory of sense of belonging places more

responsibility on the professors to engage and interact with student. Especially if

students feel isolated or different, professors should make them feel comfortable. White

professors who are culturally encapsulated must engage in effective diversity training.

Faculty-Student Interaction

Students communicated a level of comfort and feeling less challenged when

asking for academic assistance and described these circumstances as positive interactions

with faculty both in and out of the classroom. Esperanza, an experienced student, spoke

about the differences in faculty-student interactions according to the level of the class.

She feels more comfortable in her teaching field math classes then she did in her general

education classes.

> Ramon expressed his excitement about a Latino professor and his interaction: Oh
>
> yeah, last year I had a history teacher that was Latino. You could tell he was
>
> Latino but he really wasn't. He just looked it you know, but did not identify with
>
> the culture or the language, yet you could go up and speak to him and there was
>
> no problem.
>
> Carmen had no concerns with her faculty, "I think they are doing a good job."
>
> Students also shared areas of concern regarding their interactions with faculty.

The importance of taking time with students was expressed by many and illustrated by

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Lusi, a student who had greater life experience due to her age, but still felt that her needs were met. She stated:

When it's a big class there is no interaction. It is just a lecture and you are on your own. But when you are in a small class like my English teacher, she makes a point to let us know [the Hispanics] that she knew that we knew what we were doing. And that we were learning and getting what she was trying to teach.

Overall, the participants expressed positive experiences regarding faculty-student interactions. They felt their needs were being met by the faculty and that faculty were doing a good job. Participants indicated that it was easier to communicate and build rapport with the instructors in their major field of study.

Academic Advising Concerns

Most of the students knew who their advisor was still; some students lacked knowledge about how developmental academic advising can enhance their campus experience. Some advisors were more available than others in the differing colleges. Although most experiences with their advisors were only a means for enrollment, a few students found a deeper connection than just selecting courses. Fernando, Martin, and Juan felt positive about their advising experience. Enrique**,** in contrast, found his advising appointment to be very unpleasant,

It was with one of my advisors. I had a really difficult time with them. I sat down with him and he was going to help me choose my classes. He was like being friendly at first and helping me out. Then I explained to him that I was on a scholarship program and our coordinator helps us with developing our grad plans. So what I did was I told him that my coordinator helped me complete this

grad plan. So I presented it to him and he got really upset and I didn't understand

at first why he got so upset. He said it was ridiculous and started using bad

language and cussed at me. Said rude things . . . He was just saying rude things I

don't feel comfortable repeating them. Just said that I shouldn't have done that.

The whole point was for us to create our own. What I explained to him that our

coordinator works with us to help get our grad plan together so I am presenting it

to you. He just completely went off on me. I felt really uncomfortable and chose

to get a different advisor assigned to me.

I asked Enrique if he had expressed his concerns to the department supervisor and he said

he had; yet, the outcome was only to switch advisors. Enrique did not feel his concern

was taken seriously. He felt it was a waste of time sharing his horrible experience with

the supervisor. He often wonders how many more students the advisor is cruel to. From

then on, none of the scholarship students saw that particular advisor.

A non-traditional participant enrolled at Kansas State University right after high

school and left before graduating because he thought he was done. This, too, was due to

the lack of communication with the advisor and lack of knowledge on how to look up his

degree audit report online at the institution. Students' experiences with their academic

advisors varied, although students tended to be more concerned than satisfied about their

academic advising situations. While many students had positive academic advising

experiences, others felt a lack of connection with their advisor, were unhappy about

inaccurate advice they were given, and felt that better overall communication of

department and program information was needed.

Many students described the contacts with their advisors as positive, with the exception of one negative experience. The meetings were short and the advisors only had time for enrollment purposes. Humberto was describes his advising experience:

Architecture wasn't that great. I didn't really know who my advisor was because she had like 200 plus kids to take care of. So I think the way they did it was just by telling us which class we need to take. With art, the advisor has a little notebook and you have a one-on-one conversation with her and she helps you pick out what classes you need. The advising in art is so much better. They care about what you are going to do.

Upperclassmen Fernando and Martin shared the same thoughts and discussed their advising experience throughout their undergraduate career. They thought both Latina advisors and the secretaries were wonderful in their respected college. "Trust me" Fernando went on to mention, "after several advisors and majors, I know the good advisors!"

Despite Fernando's feelings about his advisor, Karina said this of her advising experience:

I was in music education. The advising was very strict and my lessons teacher always telling exactly what to take. Then I switched to psychology. My advisor there thought I would graduate on time, but now I am not sure. I feel like sometimes some advisors don't necessarily know how to advise students.

More developmental and positive advising experiences were shared by a number of students. Juan shared his positive thoughts regarding his connection with his advisor, stressing the strong outreach done by his advisor on his behalf:

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It's been very good**.** I feel very fortunate to have a Latina advisor because I feel I can connect with her. I'm confident with her. I know I can tell her anything; she won't lead me the wrong way. Seems like I just meet all the right people [happily] maybe somebody up there is just watching out for me. I don't know. I feel good. I know if I have a problem or a question I can just message my advisor and she'll help me out. Or if I just need to talk to her about anything casually I can just, you know, pop and say hey what's up.

According to several of the participants, their academic advisors played a significant role in their academic career plan. An advisor is not one who just advises the students on which courses to take, but advises them in academic and social integration (Kuh, 2008). These practices tend to have a greater effect in engagement and student learning because it requires students to take responsibility for activities that require daily decision and task. As a result, students become more invested in the activities and more committed to the institution (Kuh, 2008).

Academic advising experiences were mostly positive, with the exception of Enrique's experience. Enrique found himself in a hostile environment with his advisor. The other participants found their advising experiences to be developmental and positive. They did not feel their advising meetings were just to enroll for classes, but to discuss ways to become engaged in activities both in and out of the classroom.

What Effect, if any, Do Latino/a Student Perceptions of Campus

Climate Have on Their Likelihood of Being Retained?

How Do Latino/as' Perception of the Campus Climate Influence Their Commitment to

the Institution?

Many of the students felt an obligation to the institution and knew not to take their

education for granted because for some of their family members, obtaining a higher

education was near impossible. Another reason for their commitment was the leadership

roles in which the students became active. Enrique said:

> I am currently involved in Bilingual Education Student Organization. I am
>
> currently the president of the organization. I am also a Student Ambassador for
>
> the College of Education. I have an office there. I am also a part of HALO. I am
>
> an officer in that position. I am also in the Business Education Club, which I am
>
> also an officer in. I try to stay busy.

> Another participant, Graciela**,** felt lucky for being given the opportunity to have

an education. She stated, "My mom, even though she never got a chance to go to school,

she was always reading or watching educational shows. Watching this made me proud

and be more committed to my school and my education."

The environment of the institution influenced Juanita's perception of the campus

climate. This built upon her commitment to the institution and making a difference. She

strongly felt a part of the institution and is an activist,

> I had looked at Kansas State University when I was younger and really liked
>
> where they ranked on a lot of programs. I thought it was really cool. I never

thought of myself as a Kansan. When I graduated from high school, Kansas State University was one of the first colleges that I thought about going to.   I am happy that I chose this school and I plan to continue all the way through. I think my program is awesome. I don't know if I would have felt the same way if I had looked at the diversity statistics before I came. I like that I feel like an activist on campus. I am a part of changing the culture. Here I am the change. That is something that needs to happen. It gives me some sense of fulfillment and commitment other than going to school. For example, just go into the union and you see the segregated groups and they are purposefully doing it. In my intro classes, a couple of students refused to consider simple facts that people raised without money struggle to get into school and finish school. I grew up with my mom making $4 an hour. For people to understand what that looks like, they don't realize when your parents are paying for school as opposed to when you are working your butt off to go to school. We are writing papers about diversity issues and a couple of students in my class would raise their hand and say that they didn't feel that this is really an issue. I am committed to this institution and want to make others aware of our presence.

Antonio's commitment to Kansas State University was initiated by an instructor at his junior college and was reinforced later by his involvement in different organizations and his leadership roles and, especially, the support from his family. He explained:

I think that I am very fortunate. I am grateful. It was a great opportunity and I feel it would have been ignorant not to take the opportunity. My instructor from

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my previous community college encouraged to commit myself to Kansas State University. He was one of my advisors/mentors. He made Kansas State University sound like a great university with a lot of opportunities and spoke highly of Developing Scholars Program and Bridges. After several discussions, it sounded like this was the place to be. A lot of it had to do with because I didn't fit in, in general. And just being homesick. Sometimes I guess even the financial burden. I think being Latino we tend to value family and one of the things we tend to do most is drop out to help support the family. There were a couple of rough times where that crossed my mind. Luckily, I had my parents to tell me that it wasn't so bad. And that I should never consider that an option and that my education was the only way. My family had mixed feelings. Negative feelings were gravitating more towards the emotional aspect. The whole separation factors. For the most part, they were very positive and supportive, which helped me stay committed without worrying about my family. Overall, I would say a couple of the professors in the psych department have influenced me and reinforced my commitment to my classes and the school. They are all very encouraging as well as my family.

Mothers' Influence on Participants' Commitment to the Institution

Many of the participants mentioned their family support. Once they had the support from their family, it allowed them to become more involved, invested in, and committed to the institution. Humberto discussed his mother's excitement, which then allowed him to fully commit himself to the institution,

My mom was really excited. She is a single parent. That was her reason to be in

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the United States was to go to school. So seeing me from a little kid from first grade to graduating from high school. She was excited when I graduated from college in Jardin. She knows that it is for the better, so she is really happy that I am out here.

Many of the participants mentioned repeatedly their mother's influence. Table 4.8 presents examples of the participants' statements determining mothers' influence. Note that several of the participants were males and came from a single mother household. A couple mentioned their parents in general, e.g., Antonio and Esperanza, and Trinicia mentioned her step-father as being excited for her, but that had not always been the case.

Table 4.8 *Mothers' Influence on Participants' Commitment to KSU*

Enrique	"As I was leaving home for college, my mom broke down crying, but knew it was the best thing for me. I had to get an education. I will make them proud."
Humberto	"My mom was really excited. She is a single parent and that is why she came to the US to go to school and seeing me accomplish that makes her proud! She knows it's for the best I am out here."
Manny	"My mom doesn't like that I am here because I am far away from her. But she knows I need to and is proud of me."
Graciela	"My mom is more excited than me that I am in school and to see me graduate."
Martin	"I would say my mom has been very supportive and encouraging in my educational endeavors. She doesn't always like that I'm away from home but she is very proud of my efforts."
Juan	"I am so far away from my mom, but I know she is proud. She has raised me and my brother as a single parent. I am going to make her so happy when I graduate."
Gabriel	"I had a baby in high school, and was awarded many scholarships, so my mom told me I may as well take advantage of it, if not for myself, for my daughter."
Carmen	"I wouldn't be in school without my mom. She takes care of my daughter while I am here. She is very proud of me. I will be the first to graduate!"
Trinicia	"My mom is very proud of me. I am her only daughter and the first to graduate from college. She is very happy."
Karina	"My mother is a single parent. She will be proud when I graduate, may even cry of happiness."

As detailed in Table 4.8 above, 10 of the 19 Latino/a participants felt their mother influenced their commitment to the institution. Having their mothers' support and encouragement was significant to them. The support allowed them to commit themselves to their studies and organizations. Leaving home and moving to attend college was emotional for some mothers. These mothers want their son or daughter to take advantage of the education they perhaps did not have. A common word used among these participants is "proud." Each mother is proud of her son or daughter who attends Kansas State University.

The student organizations were highly significant in fostering the sense of belonging of the Latino/a participants at Kansas State University. Their leadership roles in the different organizations increased their commitment to the institution. Having familial support and structural diversity in place, or at least a few strong organizations, increased the participants' sense of belonging. The structural aspects related to campus climate that were in place influenced the participants' perceptions of their sense of belonging.

How Do Latino/as' Perception of Campus Climate Influence Their Desire to Graduate?

All of the participants identified their desire to graduate. Regardless of the campus climate, or lack of diversity, they would not allow that to be an additional barrier to graduation. For example**,** Carmen told how graduating from her program that is nationally recognized makes her proud, "I feel good about graduating. I have been told that we have the number one landscape architecture program in the nation. Whenever we

graduate we have a bunch of employers come to recruit us." Juan shared feelings similar to those of Carmen:

> I would feel good. I know this is a prestigious university of, if I remember correctly, this is one of the top ten school that gives out the most prestigious scholarships or the Rhodes Scholarship winners and Marshal winners and I would feel confident with my degree. I mean, I'd feel proud of it . . . that I earned it here.

The participants were determined and regardless of the campus climate, or lack of diversity, they would graduate. Hence, campus climate did not have any influence on their desire to graduate; if anything, it influenced them more. They want to graduate from Kansas State University with one of the best landscape architecture programs in the nation, or from the College of Education, with the highest number of teacher education graduates in the state.

Because Familia Matters Most

This is a slogan Kansas State University displays on its football billboard. Many of the participants have strong support from their families who expect them to graduate and come home to take care of the family. Many of the students identified their mother as the more influential person who enhanced their decision to graduate. Frank expressed his thoughts,

> I know for my family it will be a really big moment. I think my mom is inviting everyone in my family. My parents are both immigrants from Mexico who came here seeking the American dream. And I'm living it for them. I am looking forward to graduation.

Graciela expressed her mother's excitement about graduating, "She is super excited, I mean like ecstatic. I feel proud cause I work really hard and I have the kids." Juanita, also a single parent, described her ambiguities,

I think on one hand my parents are proud of me. On another hand, there was disappointment I didn't go to college right out of high school. The reason being was because I had two kids in high school. My parents thought it was too big of a task for me to try and take on. I think it would have been hard to go back then. I am glad that I know myself a little bit better now and able to handle college a lot better at an emotional level too. I still could have gone back then and it disappoints me that they didn't have the faith in me back then. I think they still sort of think the task is too big. They are supportive but they don't help at all. I barely talk to them. On one hand they are glad to see that I am back in Kansas and two that I am in school and doing something positive. They are still questioning though.

Family clearly is important to these participants and it shows they come from a united familia. Even if their parents do not understand the levels of education, nor they themselves are educated, they are proud of their children, "orgullosos de sus hijos." I will never forget when I graduated from college and my dad came to see me walk across the stage. He tapped a White man next to him and said, "ella es mi hija," she is my daughter. At that point, I realized how proud he was of me. It is uncommon for the men of the family to be expressive, but I knew this was how he showed his excitement. Graduation from college is a big moment, especially for those of us of whom it is not expected nor provided with the tools to complete the journey to a degree.

Do Latino/as' Perception of Campus Climate Influence Their Sense of Belonging?

Juanita felt it was difficult to have strong sense of belonging because she is gay and Latina. She thinks if she were "just" Latina, her experiences would be different. She claimed:

I think, on one hand, as an individual person I felt accepted. On another hand all the hats that I wear and the organizations that I belong in, I do not feel a sense of belonging. In the LGBT sorority and then being Latino at the same time being gay and Latino is not accepted ever. Let me give you an example of why I feel this way. The rest of our chapters in other states are part of their multicultural councils and when our sorority approached the multicultural council, they told us that we didn't fit in with the multicultural council because being gay was a choice and we chose to be discriminated against. That is shocking and I'm like can you please stop perpetuating that nonsense. It is hard enough to be a Latino college student and being identified as a gay Latino college student and nontraditional and I have kids. I feel like the odds are stacked against me. I feel accepted in my program and my sorority. But then as gay and Latina, it is really hard especially inside your family. Plus, it is politically and religious not accepted. I don't know how I became the person that I am growing up in the house that I did. It is odd and I feel accepted, yea I am a Latino student. But if I ask them to accept me as a whole, they can't. I just simply don't have a sense of belonging.

Karina's experience of sense of belonging was the complete opposite of Juanita's. She explained, "I feel a very strong sense of belonging. I am welcomed because it's such a small community [music department]. They made me feel pretty welcomed, and also

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people are helpful where ever I go." Many of the students felt they had a stronger sense of belonging because they knew someone who was already attending Kansas State University or because they immediately made a connection with the students in HALO or DSP. For example, Gabriel states, "I knew this girl before coming here and I asked her about the HALO information and when the meeting was. So I just showed up. A lot of the Betas are in HALO. A really good friend of mine got me into the Betas."

Juan compared his sense of belonging when he first arrived on campus to now:

When I first arrived here, I felt I belonged, or welcomed. I didn't feel any discrimination until people began to know my name. They would say so your name is Juan. Do you have illegal people in your family and ask what I thought of illegal immigration, right/wrong? Some are not tolerant of it and like I would say you don't have to accept what I think or who I am, but you know it's important to be tolerant, to practice tolerance. I quickly learned that if I wanted to belong to the institution, I had to be tolerant myself and get involved.

By being active in student organizations, participants began meeting other Latino/a students. Their participation in student organizations already structurally in place or some initiated by leaders on campus, enhanced their sense of belonging. LULAC recently was made an official organization on the campus. In one case, a participant felt because of who she was, gay and Latina, the odds were against her and, therefore, she did not have a sense of belonging to the institution. She approached the Office of Diversity at Kansas State University to request that her sorority become a part of the multicultural council and was rejected because they believed being gay was a choice, unlike being Latina.

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Summary

The themes that emerged from the participants' interviews were the following: (a) Latino/a student identity: quien soy, who am I? (b) Mi Casa es su Casa, (c) mi familia away from home, (d) class size matters, (e) importance of interaction and learning relationships, (f) overall fairness in the classroom environment, (g) faculty-student interaction, (h) academic advising concerns, (i) commitment to the university, (j) mothers' influence, (k) desire to graduate, (l) because familia matters most, and (m) sense of belonging.

The findings overall were positive about Kansas State University. According to the participants, faculty and students seem to interact well for the most part. It is unfortunate that some faculty members do not know how to implement a positive activity on White Privilege or perhaps have not received sensitivity training for these issues. Living in the residence was a good experience for a couple of students even though they had to assimilate to "fit in," which resulted in poor grades and poor behavior. Many chose roommates from their hometowns, which helped their feeling of already knowing someone before they came to campus. Structural diversity is important to the Latino/a students on campus. Having strong Latino/a student organizations students can participate in makes a difference in their sense of belonging. Their leadership roles in these organizations enhance their commitment to the institution. Their mothers' support and encouragement overall adds to the commitment to graduate from the institution.

An example of behavioral dimension was the participants not having difficulty interacting with other students of different races in their classes. The participants had no problems working in groups and being paired with White students; they just did not

appreciate the jokes about Latinos or international students. Psychologically, the

Latino/a students felt they belonged to the institution because of the student

organizations, their organization advisors, and a couple Latina academic advisors. Along

with these influences, their mothers' influence was significant. It was a surprising finding

how many Latino/as brought up their mothers and how proud she will be when they

graduate. However, their academic advisors had an influence in how they felt on campus,

if in fact they really belonged. For one participant, his advising experience was a hostile

experience. Historically, the institution should recognize there have not been many

Latino/as enrolled at this institution, until now.

It was a surprise to the researcher that because of the literature and her

experience, religion was not as often mentioned as expected. It was expected religion

would be identified more often by the participants and be more important to them than

they identified it. Although not as important for some participants, Esperanza shared her

thoughts on religion**:**

> Religion is important to me because it is the foundation of my life standards. I
>
> respect the traditions and values of my Catholic religion. When I am away from
>
> home, my faith is the only thing that feels real in this complex world.

Martin shared his thoughts on religion, "I just went to mass for the first time last week. It

just isn't as important."

Religion played a role in Esperanza's family and it influenced some of her

decisions. It is her home away from home. For Esperanza, it is important and it should

not be minimized just because it is not as important to others.

Chapter Five provides the discussion and interpretation of the results, interpretations around findings and research questions, and how they relate to the literature. Lastly**,** Chapter Five consists of implications for practice for campus climate and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5 - **Discussion**

Latino/a students are doing the best with what they learned in high school and are attending college in gradually increasing numbers to become better citizens (Fry, 2004, 2009; Nevarez & Rico, 2007). Educators and parents must take responsibility and provide Latino/a students with the preparation they deserve and teach them "better." Latino/as comprise more than half of the overall population growth in the United States in this decade. It is a new milestone for the nation's largest minority group (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). Despite their significant population, they lag behind in graduation rates (Hurtado & Kamimura, 2003; Nora, 2003). In 1970, only one-third of young female Hispanics were enrolled in school or college. By 2007, nearly half of young female Hispanics were pursuing schooling (Fry, 2009). By the year 2025, nearly one-quarter of the nation's college-age population will be Latino/a. But too few Latino/as are earning college and university degrees. Accelerating Latino/a student success now–and for the next years–is vital to our national interest.

What is happening in higher education that Latino/a enrollments have not kept pace relative to their growing population? Is it the student who is failing or the system that has failed to recruit and retain Latino/a students? A national survey of 2,012 Latinos ages 16 and older by the Pew Hispanic Center conducted from August 5, 2009 to September 16, 2009 found interesting results. Nearly nine in ten (89%) Latino/a young adults ages 16 to 25 reported that a college education is important for success in life. Yet, only about half that number (48%) plan to pursue a college degree. The causes of the gap between Latino/as and their attainment in higher education must be identified.

The most prominent reason for the gap between the high value Latino/as place on education and their more modest aspirations to finish college appears to come from financial pressure to support a family (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Nearly three-quarters (74%) of all 16- to 25-year-old survey respondents who cut their education short during or right after high school reported they did so because they had to support their family. Other reasons for not completing college included poor English skills (cited by about half of respondents who cut short their education), a dislike of school, and a feeling that they didn't need more education for the careers they want (each cited by about four in ten respondents who cut their education short). Latino/a schooling in the U.S. long has been characterized by high dropout rates and low college completion rates. Both problems have moderated over time, but a persistent educational attainment gap remains between Latino/as and Whites (Fry, 2004; Lopez, 2009). When asked why Latino/as on average do not do as well as other students in school, more respondents in the Pew Hispanic Center (2009) survey blamed poor parenting and poor English skills rather than poor teachers. When Latino/as graduate high school, they exceed their parents' education attainment. The explanation that Latino/a students do not work as hard as other students was cited by the fewest survey respondents. Fewer than four in ten (38%) see the lack of hard work as a major reason for the achievement gap. Latino/a students are second to last in the percentage of students who meet or exceed standards of reading during the eleventh grade (Tussing, 2009). One participant, Trinicia, stated,

> High school does not prepare us for college. Our high school didn't. Even people
> that went to community college said that they didn't feel prepared. The classes
> were a lot harder. I realize it is a stretch, but not impossible. They are really not

teaching us how to prepare for college. It is a hard transition, which is why a lot

of my friends dropped out of high school and never made it to college.

Once again, despite the rapid growth, there are structural institutionalized barriers

keeping Latino/as from attaining a bachelor's degree. For example, multiple reports

conducted by The Pew Hispanic Center (2009) (Fry, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2009) recognized

the cost of tuition and a need to work and earn money as factors that contribute to

Latino/as not attending college. However, the lack of a diverse campus climate for

Latino/a students at PWIs creates barriers. Campus climate related to the different

aspects of diversity could influence the students' sense of belonging at the institution.

As more Latino/a students graduate from high school and enroll in institutions of

higher learning, it is becoming clear that these institutions are ill prepared to assist the

Latino/a student body to successfully attain bachelor's degrees and associate's degrees

(Thomas, 2005). According to Fry (2004), universities must be aware of the change in

Latino/a demographics and obstacles they face in college. The only way institutions will

be able to insure Latino/as have an equal opportunity to graduate is by acknowledging the

population trends and preparing for the obstacles Latino/a students encounter when they

enroll in higher education institutions.

The purpose of this research was to explore the campus climate and sense of

belonging for Latino/a students at Kansas State University, a PWI. Campus climate is a

main factor in how students feel regarding acceptance, a welcoming environment, or

belonging. Campus climate for this study included academic and social environments.

Participants' commitment to the institution and persistence to graduation also were

explored. Nineteen in depth interviews were conducted in summer through fall 2009.

The Latino/a participants were mostly sophomores, juniors, and seniors, with one

freshman. Data analysis began during late fall 2009.

This research was a qualitative multiple case study. Criterion and purposeful

sampling were used for this research. Lists were requested from the Registrar's Office of

all enrolled Latino/a undergraduate students. This list consisted of students who met the

following criteria: (a) currently enrolled full-time at Kansas State University, (b)

undergraduate, and (c) self-identified as Latino/a (on admissions application, the student

will have checked #4, for Hispanic). The list provided each student's email address,

gender, generation status, transfer status, and academic classification (e.g. freshman,

sophomore, junior, senior).

An invitation to participate in the study was sent via electronic mail. Students

responded to the e-mail indicating their willingness to volunteer for the study. They then

were contacted and an interview scheduled. Interviews averaged 60 minutes each and

took place in a sound proof studio. To accommodate two of the participants, their

interviews took place at a public library in a private room. The interviews were then

transcribed and the recordings are stored in a locked cabinet for three years.

Throughout this research, the focus was to examine the experiences of

undergraduate Latino/a students at Kansas State University. The following questions

were posed:

1.   How do Latino/a students perceive the campus climate at Kansas State
University?

    a.   How do Latino/a students perceive their university experience
outside of their academic classes (e.g., student life, residence halls,

community)?

b.   How Latino/a students perceive their experience in the academic classroom?

2.   What effect, if any, do Latino/a student perceptions of campus climate have on their likelihood of being retained?

a.   How do Latino/a students' perception influence their commitment to the institution?

b.   How do Latino/a students' perception of campus climate influence their desire to graduate?

c.   How do Latino/a students' perception of campus climate influence their sense of belonging?

In the following section, these questions are answered and the results of the study are interpreted.

Interpretation

The results of this study indicated the factors that are discussed are crucial in the recruitment and retention of Latino/a students. Structural diversity must be in place with a critical mass of under-represented students and student organizations for under-represented students. The results of the study indicated how vital the academic programs and student organizations were for the sense of belonging of Latino/a participants. For example, participants identified the Hispanic American Leadership Organization, Sigma Lambda Beta, and the Bilingual Education Student Organization as being critical student organizations that provided a sense of belonging to the institution.

Once the campus achieves structural diversity, the psychological climate of the institution promotes a sense of belonging, i.e., if Latino/a students perceive there are other students like them or ones they can relate to, they will feel like it is their home away from home. The psychological climate is students' perception of the campus climate, which includes how they are treated by other students, faculty, staff, and administrators. If institutions have a historical legacy of excluding under-represented students, they can begin by addressing structural diversity and critical mass if they are serious about recruiting, retaining, and creating a welcoming campus climate for under-represented students.

How Do Latino/a Students Perceive the Campus Climate at Kansas State University?

The Latino/a students perceived the campus climate at Kansas State University are mostly positive. Despite the lack of a critical mass of Latino/a students at Kansas State University, (650 Latino/a students of the 23,000), the Latino/a student participants psychologically felt a part of the institution. The reason for their psychological sense of belonging is due to their involvement in structurally diverse academic programs such as Developing Scholars or the Bilingual Education Students Interacting to Obtain Success. Research indicates that campus climate is a key contributor in creating a sense of institutional belonging through inclusiveness for the students (Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1998; Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006; Milem et al., 2005; Nevarez & Rico, 2007; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). This research is supported by the results of this study.

How do Latino/a students perceive their university experience outside of their

academic classes (e.g., student life, residence halls, community)?

Tinto's (1987) research indicates that when students are engaged in university activities, it increases their likelihood of being retained. However, Tinto did not investigate the outcomes of Latino/as' engagement in activities at PWIs, such as Kansas State University. The findings from this study support Tinto's research regarding involvement or engagement increasing the students' commitment to and feeling a part of the institution. For example, many of the participants are involved in student organizations and their leadership roles have increased their commitment and sense of belonging. An example that supports Tinto (1993), yet introduces a dimension he did not consider is although the students may try to fit in, they do not appreciate the racist jokes. For example, although Carmen and Fernando are comfortable at Kansas State University, they nevertheless do not appreciate the racist jokes they had to endure. Although the research results somewhat supports Tinto (1993), exceptions for Latino/as' experiences are significant. Latino/a or other under-represented groups were not accounted for in his theory. After living in his scholarship residence hall for two semesters, Fernando still had concerns, even though the racist jokes diminished:

> It's been a great opportunity for me not just academically but socially. Because I am from Hispanic background and the university is mostly White, I haven't found another group I can relate to as much as this one. For example, we went on a retreat and got to speak Spanish all weekend. Then I had to return for lunch at the scholarship house I live in with all White students. I was just looking down at my

plate thinking what a difference, because I can't relate to these [White] students

like I was at the retreat [with the Latino/a students].

Carmen shared her experience and feelings,

Sometimes I hear racist jokes, then people see that I am there and say sorry. Even

if I was not there, it is not okay to say jokes like that. What if they said it in front

of a person who could not defend themselves?

The participants who lived on campus or off campus differed in their experiences

of meeting new people and engagement on campus. Offering racial/ethnic-themed

residential floors as housing options for first year racial/ethnic minority students

supported success. This living arrangement provided the BESITOS Latino/as with a

warm and comforting environment. Racial/ethnic-themed residential housing floors

foster personal growth and identity development, provide support and culturally

appealing programs, and overall result in better adjustment to college as noted by the

participants in the BESITOS program. These floors help to fill the social and cultural

void often felt by Latino/a students. This provides comfort to the students so that the

institution becomes a home away from home. Martin commented that on his days off

from student teaching, he finds himself in the DSP office on campus because it is his

home, and the director is like his mom.

There also was a general awareness and concern about the value of diversity in

connection to the quality of participants' educational experiences outside their academic

classes. Student organizations and programs for minority students were important;

however, the participants felt the institution often used them as "recruiters" and their

status as students was diminished. They were called upon to help by recruiting more

students, instead of attending their classes. Many participants felt a strong connection to their organization or program advisor. That was one of the main reasons they felt supported. These relationships encouraged them to engage in other activities.

Research indicates that for Latino/a students at PWIs, connections to family and support systems are critical (Gonzales, 2002; Hurtado et at., 1999; Torres, 2003). For many students, staying close to family can be a challenge, especially when family may live several hours away and not in the immediate area. Remaining close to family creates a contradiction between one aspect of students' needs for college success when research reports students should immerse themselves in the campus environment (Nevarez & Rico, 2007; Nora & Ramirez, 2006; Torres, 2003). With this in mind, establishing connections in the first few weeks of classes with the faculty and staff is crucial for students. Connections with faculty, staff, and advisors can help make students feel a part of the institution. These types of connections should be purposeful and initiated by the faculty/staff. Latino/a students tend to isolate themselves or associate in their own groups for support. As a result, it is important for the institution to make an effort to connect with the students while making them feel welcomed.

How Do Latino/a Students Perceive Their Experience in the Academic Classroom?

Gonzales (2002) discussed how disconnected Chicano students felt from the faculty, especially because faculty assumed one Latino/a represented all Latino/as. Fernando's feelings aligned with Gonzales' research. He said, "When I speak of my experiences in Brazil, I'm not representing all Latino ethnicities, and that is how they make me feel." The majority of the participants had overall positive comments about the faculty at Kansas State University. Carmen stated,

I think it is easier for faculty to remember me because I do look different than everyone else. So they treat me the same. It is just easier for them to remember my name and my face. It makes it more personable.

Rankin and Reason (2005) found students of color experience hostile, intimidating behavior at higher rates than White students. Similarly, Enrique experienced hostility and perceived the campus climate as more racist than his White friends. Enrique claimed he felt like just a number at the institution. He also stated he experienced racism in hostile environments both in and out of class. He coped by getting used to or ignoring it. For example, his experience in which his advisor cursed at and belittled him represents a hostile environment. According to the National Academic Advising Association's (NACADA, 2010) Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising, advisors are responsible (a) to the individuals they advise, (b) for involving others, when appropriate, in the advising process, (c) to their institutions, (d) to higher education, (e) to their educational community, and (f) for their professional practices and for themselves personally. The advisor's behavior was not acceptable and Enrique should not have been subjected to such a hostile environment. The advisor's behavior is certainly not congruent with the research findings for best practices for advising, teaching, or learning in higher education.

Advisors play a significant role in creating a sense of belonging, commitment to the institution, and guiding students through their academic career plan that leads to graduation (Gore & Metz, 2008). When participants were asked about the academic advising they received at the institution, many participant responses were positive. For example, Fernando said that he spoke to his advisor about life rather than his courses

most of the time. He felt that a couple of the advisors in his major's advising office sincerely wanted to know how he was doing emotionally and how his family was doing. They were not concerned only about academics. Only one of the participant's had a negative experience with his advisor.

Gonzales (2002) also noted that Chicanos became excited to see other Chicanos among participants. All of the participants described being excited when they saw other Latino/as on campus or at church. In Enrique's case, he stated, "Oh wow there is a Latino!" Carmen was usually the only Latina in her classes, and when she saw another one, she ran to welcome him/her. Then they have the chance to speak Spanish! Carmen noted that it is hard to speak in Spanish at Kansas State University since there are not many Spanish speakers.

What Effect, if any, Do Latino/a Students' Perceptions of Campus Climate Have on Their Likelihood of Being Retained?

How do Latino/a students' perception influence their commitment to the institution?

Retention of Latino/as is an issue of interest, as is recruitment for higher education. At Kansas State University there is a retention committee that seeks to improve the overall retention rates for the institution. Research shows that the more commitment students have to the institution, the more likely they will graduate (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Gonzalez, 2002; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Nora & Ramirez, 2006). In relating the influences of academic and environmental factors on Latino/a college degree attainment, Nora and Ramirez (2006) found that as students enter higher education, they bring a sense of purpose and an allegiance to their institution of choice. Educational

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goals and commitment to enroll and graduate from a specific institution provide the

student with a sense of purpose to attaining a degree at that institution (Nora & Ramirez,

2006). Students who are more committed to their goal of obtaining a degree are more

likely than their less committed peers to participate in the types of academic and social

activities that provide the support they need to meet the challenges faced during the initial

year of college.

The results from this research study aligns with previous research findings

(Arbona & Nora, 2007; Gonzalez, 2002; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Nora & Ramirez, 2006),

in that all of the participants were committed to the institution and showed it by bringing

their families to Kansas State University. Family members purchased t-shirts with the

school logo or mascot, and they wore these t-shirts, caps, or miscellaneous items when

they returned home. The items with the university name or logo provide free

advertisement for the institution. These outward manifestations may be interpreted as

demonstrating commitment to their institution. Many of the participants also were

committed to their academic majors and organizations, which enhanced their overall

commitment to Kansas State University. For example, Enrique was a member of several

organizations and held executive positions. When asked about his commitment, Enrique

said he was highly committed. If he fails, he would not just be failing himself, but his

family as well.

The BESITOS program had a special family event where all the BESITOS

parents attended Family Day at the university. The parents, aunts, uncles, nieces, and

nephews all attended, which is a common in Latino families. This attendance showed

support and witnessed the commitment their sons or daughters have to Kansas State

University. These parents demonstrated support for their children with their willingness to learn more about the university by attending parent workshops conducted in Spanish. This also exemplified the commitment to the university by the students. It was as though the students were introducing their parents to their partners, or significant others, which is significant in the Latino community. For Graciela, who is not part of the scholarship program, her commitment to the institution was more for her parents than for herself. She said, "I think my parents are more proud than I am. I am the only one of 70 cousins who have been to college, with the exception of two cousins who I think may have gone to college too."

Latino households in general are unfamiliar with American higher education. As a result, some parents do not understand why their children even attend college (Kapp & Marr, 2002). Similarly, Torres (2003) found the parents of Latino/a students do not understand why in addition to attending class, students must also spend time studying. This was represented in Juanita's statement:

> A lot of my professors do not understand Latino students. Our family lives are a lot different than the family lives of Middle America. For many of us, our parents do not know why we are in school, why we have to study long hours, or why we put our education before a job. They do not speak English and sometimes they just do not get it, not because they do not want to, but because they do not know better. Perhaps, if professors or administrators understood this, we could find ways to combat this. Educating parents and providing informational workshops about college to parents would be supportive. This would be helpful to our parents while creating a relationship with the institution before attending. Instead

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of thinking that a high school education is good enough, they need to be aware what we can do beyond that.

How Do Latino/a Students' Perception of Campus Climate Influence Their Desire to Graduate?

For many Latino/a students, families are both inspirational and problematic. More than three-fourths of the students in the study said their parents believe going to college is the most important thing for them to do right after high school, but among Latino/as of all ages, 57% cited the reason Latino/a students do not perform well academically is because parents don't play an active role in their children's education (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). The results of this research study indicated that most parents did not play an active role in their children's education. Parents' inactive role was because of the language barrier or feelings that their sons or daughters could speak and understand English, eliminating the need for their presence at orientation. Another factor contributing to Latino/as not attending college or failing to graduate, is their parents' view that their children do not need a college degree to be successful and their children are already far more educated than they. However, according to Manny, his parents were excited about his college attendance because he was going to be working and independent. It was viewed as an accomplishment by his dad because he always wanted Manny to be better.

All 19 participants stated that they had the support of their parents, and that some of their parents came to campus for the Family Weekend mentioned previously. For example, Fernando, Esperanza, Enrique, and Trinicia's parents and families attended their scholarship group's family day, which also was on the same day as the university's

Family Day. The scholarship mentors organized a day for the families that made them feel welcome. They preferred going to a "disquiada" or BBQ where their children played games, listened to Spanish music, and had a piñata. Granted, they may have been interested in attending the football game on Family Day as part of the university's celebration; however, the cost to attend an average football game at the university is $25-$75 dollars per person. Many of the parents could not have afforded going to the game nor were they the university's season ticket holders.

Another way the students feel a part of the community is through the Catholic Church. Latino/a students are connected to their faith and the Virgen de Guadalupe, otherwise known as the Virgin Mary. Esperanza described it best:

> I worship God and pray for the Virgen de Guadalupe to intercede for me. She is a role model and like a mother figure for me. I do the traditional dance for the "dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe." I hold on to those traditions as best I can while I am away at College, but sometimes it is hard. I think the reason why I rely on my religion is because it was instilled in me as a child, religion and familia were very important.

How Do Latino/a Students' Perception of Campus Climate Influence Their Sense of Belonging?

The results of this study indicate the participants embraced the need for diversity on campus and in the community. They saw the need for student involvement in non-race-based groups. For example, the fraternities and sororities for Latino/a students also included non-Latino/as. Tinto's (1987) research shows that the more involved a student is

in extra-curricular activities, the stronger their sense of belonging to the institution, which leads to retention and graduation. Thus, Tinto's (1987) research supported these findings; though, one must be careful with the involvement at PWIs (Hurtado, 2002, 2007). Not everyone is ready for the changing face of America.

Implications for Campus Climate for Diversity

What can a PWI such as Kansas State University do to make their institution a pluralistic community? Many programs are in place for undergraduate minorities or under-prepared students at Kansas State University (e.g., Pilots, BESITOS, DSP, Bridges, SEMILLAS, and ALIANZA). One major practice, as noted previously, is that the institution should analyze the efforts in place and their level of effectiveness. This is important because diversity on campus affects the sense of belonging for Latino/a students. As many of the participants said, as soon as they saw a Latino/a on campus they were excited! Once the participants saw the institution's commitment to diversity, it motivated them to become involved, making them feel a part of the institution. This increased their commitment to the university because they felt that they were part of the family and this was their home away from home. Once these factors are in place, graduation becomes achievable for Latino/a students and they make an increased investment in their education and institution. Once the participants felt this way, they serve as recruitment representatives for the university. These participants become role models for their family and friends. This was how Gabriel was recruited: "I knew this girl before coming here. I asked her about HALO and the meetings, and a really good friend got me interested in becoming a future Beta." However, the limited number of

Latino/a students on a campus should not be used or abused. Having an ambassador

program to mentor prospective students from local high schools instead of using them as

admissions representatives is most effective (Gupton et al., 2009).

A study by Hawkins and Larabee (2009) regarding minorities and campus climate

found that racial/ethnic minority students who attended PWIs institutions experienced

alienation as well as social and cultural isolation on the campuses researched. For this

reason, they recommended the following engagement strategies for minority students,

some of which are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 *Strategies for Institutions to Enhance Minority Retention*

1. Provide a mentoring program specifically designed to meet the needs of first-year racial/ethnic minority students.
2. Represent racial/ethnic minority students in all campus publications. This representation helps minority students see pictures of culturally appealing events and activities that will make them feel encouraged to become involved outside of class.
3. Develop a comprehensive minority leadership program focused on the needs of minority students. This will encourage them to become involved in student organizations and leadership opportunities.
4. Create culture-specific resource guides for first year racial/ethnic subpopulations, such as the NACADA Family Guide to Academic Advising (Appendix I), (Smith & Gordon, 2008).
5. During orientation, provide incoming racial/ethnic minority students with an information card so they can identify student services or organization about which they would like to know more.

Implications for Structural Diversity

Increasing the number of Latino/a undergraduate students is a challenge faced by

many PWIs. Although a challenge, increasing Latino/a enrollment should not be ignored

or covered up by talk and no action. Administrators must recognize and call upon their

faculty as resources to recruit students. The Office of Admissions cannot be the sole

party responsible for recruiting Latino/a students, nor can it be the responsibility of only

the Latino student groups. Responsibility for recruiting Latino/a students should be a

university-wide effort. Although there are current efforts to recruit Latino/a students,

additional work remains to be done to reflect the changing face of America. All of

America is currently facing a financial hardship; choices regarding the recruitment and

retention of Latino/a students may not be a high priority for some institutions. Low

priority status may be due in part to research indicating Latino/as' under preparedness for

college and not being viewed as scholarly due to often arriving on campus needing more

attention and support (Castillo-Clark & Kalionzes, 2008) as opposed to the Rhodes or

Truman scholars. Financial aid is a necessity, as well as additional academic services and

minority programs that need to be made available for retaining recruited Latino/as.

     Simply offering programs based on promising practices does not guarantee

Latino/a student success. Institutional programs and practices must be a high priority for

the institution (Kuh, 2008). It is at this point that the value of diversity becomes a

question for the institution. It is a true concern. Without appropriate representation of a

diverse student body, faculty, and staff, the quality of the educational experiences for all

students lag behind students who are being culturally enriched on their campus. Carmen's

statement that seeing a Latino on campus excited her about being here, being able to

speak Spanish, and being herself testifies to the power of and need for diversity. Martin

receiving the Commerce Bank Presidential Award for the student diversifying the

campus at Kansas State University demonstrates diversity in action. Hopefully, others

also will become active and embrace diversity.

Hiring Latino/a admissions counselors or counselors who speak Spanish can result in being helpful to Latino/a student. In addition to the recruitment of Latino/a students, the institution cannot ignore the recruitment of Latino/a faculty and staff. Latino/a faculty and staff serve as mentors, role models, and advisors to Latino groups, or research faculty mentors, as well as shaping the structure of a diverse campus. This requires the institution to develop specific plans for attracting and retaining diverse faculty and staff, for example, support for a Latino/a faculty alliance on campus or dual career opportunities for spouses. An optional Spanish Orientation for parents during orientation and enrollment and advertising this option when sending out information to prospective students for this day is a specific effort universities can make.

Implications for Psychological Climate for Diversity: How do Latino/a students perceive the campus climate at Kansas State University?

How students perceive their experiences in the university setting is the notion of the psychological climate. When Fernando was asked his level, on a scale of one to ten, of comfort and sense of belonging at the institution, he stated, "An eleven!" How a student perceives the institution's climate is their reality. Or, how the student perceives their advising on campus can be their reality; how they perceive their overall experience is their reality. Students' understandings of their experiences and perceptions are important and should be heard. This is crucial for the development and improvement of a positive campus climate (Hurtado et al., 1999). Even though the structural diversity may not be intact, students must feel they are a part of the institution. These research results showed those student participants like Elijah and Gabriel, who were raised in predominately White towns, were very comfortable in the halls, classes, and community.

Implications for Behavioral Diversity

The actual interactions with other students or student behavior in the classroom or informal gatherings are encompassed in behavioral diversity. It is important to note student interactions with faculty or other students can affect learning. All the participants said their professors were approachable and easy to interact with. Meeting peers in class and in the residence halls helped to establish the study groups needed to be successful in class. Tutoring was readily available and some of the participants were tutors themselves and felt their experiences as tutors had affected their learning.

The institution is responsible for graduating competent, productive contributors to society. Hence, it should be concerned for all students gaining experience with diversity. Departments should assure their prospective students that their curriculum encompasses all the realms of education, including diversity. Follow through with promises of what their campus is really like is important for Latino/a student recruitment.

Venues for student awareness of diversity could be supported on university campuses by their multicultural office, a university activities board, residential life, counseling center, or other offices. These offices should host different workshops with topics such as: confronting racist behaviors; viewing and discussing the movie, "Beyond Skin Deep;" or Affirmative Action 101 (Quaye et al., 2009). An additional support would be the development of a peer-mentoring program among first-year students of any cultural background, with similar interests (e.g., Spanish Club). Interacting with students from the same major can provide students with the opportunity to ask questions and begin building the necessary social and cultural networks to engage in internship or volunteer opportunities (Quaye et al., 2009).

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Improving faculty awareness of the resources available to students on campus could include sessions such as implications for teaching and learning, assigning or volunteering to be faculty mentors, and advising tips for faculty who advise Latino/a students (and their parents). Such sessions for faculty development related to diversity need to be well developed with depth facilitated by people who have demonstrated success in diversity or multicultural competencies, not a superficial, "feel good" approach. Guia de Consejera Academica para la Familia/A Family Guide to Academic Advising (Appendix I) is a family resource available in Spanish for $3 through the National Academic Advising Association (Smith & Gordon, 2008). This resource guide details the first year experience for students in transition to college including enrollment, selection of classes, how to create an academic plan, and is essentially a general guide on advising. The institution should consider providing them to parents or making them available to parents to purchase during orientation and enrollment (Hawkins & Larabee, 2009; Quaye et al., 2009).

For institutions in general, the continued representation of racial and ethnic minorities in their recruitment or admissions publications is important. Both a written text and pictures of minority students engaged in campus activities should be included in these publications. Representation of these groups will provide these students with a sense of comfort and belonging to the institution. New students will be motivated and encouraged to engage in these activities by identifying with the pictures (Quaye et al., 2009). The diverse representation in promotional and informational materials also will be conducive to reducing the "Whiteness" of the institution, and the culture shock Latino/a students encounter when they arrive on campus.

Connections for Students

The Latino organizations and the academic programs (e.g., Developing Scholars or BESITOS) have served as positive connections for students. These connections have enhanced the sense of belonging of Latino/a students. As participants recounted their experiences both in and outside of the classroom, it was apparent they need to be engaged in the classroom. They can engage by creating their own cohorts in the class or class discussions. This enhances their sense of belonging and purpose in the class. Large lecture halls are difficult settings in which to engage. Instead, many participants felt they were just "there" and not a part of the class. By engaging in class discussion or joining a cohort, they feel a part of the class. Perhaps more opportunities for students to work individually with faculty members would be appropriate. This could be accomplished as the Developing Scholars Program has done and proven successful. The majority of the participants did not feel there were major issues in the classroom and felt comfortable among White students.

In terms of the participants connecting with their advisors, many of the participants felt that it was a positive experience. However, a couple of them did not feel connected with their advisor. Instead, they depended on their organization advisor as a mentor and advisor. Having advising group sessions at a mutually agreeable place, such as the student union, offers the possibility to build rapport between the advisor and advisee. Utilizing the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) resources, webinars, and/or trainings are recommended highly. Table 5.2 presents the overall recommendations for institutions on the move to recruit and retain under-represented students (Quaye et al., 2009, pp. 188-194).

Table 5.2 *Recommendations for Institutions to Diversify*

Assessment of Engagement	Assess racial/ethnic minority students' engagement in predominantly White classrooms through collecting and interpreting data.
Assessment of Campus and Classroom Climate	Assess campus and classroom climate. Continuing with previous strategies, assessing differing aspects of the classroom and campus climate becomes crucial for any institution attempting to respond to the needs of racial/ethnic minority students in classroom settings.
Sharing Assessment Data	Share critical assessment data. Simply having data is not enough, as faculty and student affairs educators must utilize the information to clarify deficiencies and develop institutional strategies that address them.
Utilization of Consultants	Utilize external consultants and assessment teams to assist in ensuring a careful examination of classroom and campus climate issues. Or a diversity audit.
Incentives and Rewards	Provide incentives and rewards for faculty members who use culturally relevant teaching methods.
Expectation of Classroom Respect	Set clear expectations of conduct in the classroom that allows for healthy debate but does not tolerate a hurtful or unsafe climate for racial/ethnic minority students. Training should be made available to educators.
Recruitment and Hiring of Faculty	Aggressively recruit and hire racial/ethnic minority faculty.

The research literature and participants agree on Latino/a students' under preparedness to come to college and on how many parents are not aware of the college engagement process. The institution should not misinterpret Latino/a parents. Their lack of awareness of college engagement should not be translated into their lack of wanting to learn about their son's or daughter's college engagement. Table 5.3 (Gupton et al., 2009, pp. 252-256) suggests engagement strategies for institutions to implement.

Table 5.3 *Suggested Engagement Strategies for Institutional Implementation*

Student Ambassador Programs	Create programs and partnerships that socially embed the university into secondary school settings to target low-income, first-generation students.
Summer Immersion programs	Develop summer immersion programs on the campus to give prospective students a preview of college experiences and expectations.
Workshops for Parents at Orientation and Enrollment	Involve parents in the precollege engagement process, or have a bilingual parent orientation.
Parent Center	Create a parent center that focuses on empowering parents to support their children.
Alumni Training Program	Implement an alumni-training program to inform college graduates of the effective techniques that engage low-income, first-generation students. Use the alumni as recruiters and mentors.
Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program	Create a peer-to-peer mentoring program that pairs up first and second-year low-income, first-generation students with third-and fourth-year students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the plethora of quantitative studies on ethnic minority experiences, more qualitative studies are recommended. For future research, this could be accomplished by aggregating or revising the questions presented in this research and administering them to Latino/a student at multiple PWIs. More research on PWIs is needed to question why they are still PWIs considering the growth of Latino population. It would be beneficial to study the campus racial climates at PWIs of different sizes and regions in the U.S.

The second area recommended for future research involves the higher education administrators/faculty/staff. The faculty must fulfill the responsibility of educating the university constituents about diverse populations, for example, the awareness of how to be culturally sensitive to White privilege activities. The administrators must be aware of the culturally competent faculty they employ and if they are truly knowledgeable about implementing diversity in the classroom. This would assist in culturally sensitizing the

attitudes and behaviors towards all students, while affecting positively Latino/a students'
academic performance, satisfaction, and retention.

The third area recommended for future research is a follow-up quantitative
survey. A seven to ten question survey on a likert scale to all Latino/a undergraduates is
recommended. The survey can include questions worded to represent the themes and
findings from this study. It could potentially include more student participants.

Future research requires the collaboration of administrators, faculty, and staff to
understand the needs of their under-represented students. Under-represented students
should not have to work alone in their retention efforts. Summits, web-minars, or
professional development sessions on how to assist under-represented students should be
in the vocabulary of the administrators. Beyond vocabulary should be strategic short-
and long-term action plans in place, followed by implementation, evaluation, and a
continuous improvement model.

Conclusion

It likely is evident by now that as a Latina who was educated at PWIs growing up,
I am passionate about Latino/as in higher education. The research results indicate that
Kansas State University fosters a sense of belonging for Latino/as. However, the two
strongest findings from this research are (a) Kansas State University should
institutionalize the programs (e.g., DSP, BESITOS, SEMILLAS) for Latino/as so they do
not depend on federally funded grants, and (b) structural diversity is important, i.e., a
representation of diverse under-represented students can enhance the sense of belonging
for new Latino/a students.

There is strength in diversification, which supports strong learning outcomes for all students in higher education. In a diverse environment, students develop critical thinking, engagement, academic, and life skills. Diversity improves the quality of education and the climate of the institution (Hurtado et al., 1998; Milem et al., 2005). Genuineness and the ability to communicate this goal will positively impact students. Two critical points in creating a welcoming climate for all students are: (a) to accept the responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that all students receive a positive educational experience and (b) to create an ongoing, institutional commitment to the educational value of diversity. These goals should filter down from the administration to the students and on to the faculty and staff. Then all will reap the benefits of competent, productive contributors to society. These connections, along with structural diversity on campus, diversity sensitivity training for faculty, and assessment of campus climate can provide a significant positive influence on the sense of belonging of students at PWIs. Mentoring programs, funding for academic assistance programs for first generation, under prepared students can provide the needed assistance to recruit, retain, and graduate Latino/a students at their institutions.

As state demographics continue to change due to growing numbers of Latino/as, each institution also must continue diligent work toward achieving a pluralistic campus community. It cannot be emphasized enough that recruiting a critical mass of Latino/a students is insufficient for success. Rather, the institution must go beyond these efforts by having retention strategies aligned for Latino/a students before they arrive on campus. While the increase in Latino/a students may be exciting initially, and a goal for the institution, the institution must also support them through to graduation. In order for

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optimal outcomes for both institution and students, institutions must be dedicated and invested in the needs of Latino/a students. From recruitment to arrival on campus by ensuring adequate support programs are in place and that further will reassure parents that their children will be well cared for during their learning process at this institution.

In conclusion, the Latino/a population in the United States has increased and continues to increase significantly (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). This is an exciting time to be Latino/a in the United States. Latino/a efforts to graduate from high school and college are essential in today's economy. Regardless of how students feel about their sense of belonging, it is important to be aware of the difference they are making. For any university on the move, Latino/a students may be what the campus climate needs to diversify their student body. In the past, perhaps Latino/a parents have not understood the value of education because they were not given that opportunity. Despite this, familia wants what is best for their "hijo" (son or daughter); a university can be their home away from home. Martin affirmed this in this research—the DSP Office is his home away from home and the director is like his mom. Having been influenced by my mother, as many participants have, she has always told me, "Después del sacrificio, viene la recompensa," meaning, "after the sacrifice, the reward shall come." Regardless of how diversified the university may be, the time has come and it is now.

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Appendix A - Email Permission to use Figure 1

From: sylvia.hurtado@gmail.com
Subject: Re: use of figure
Date: January 26, 2010 5:37:29 PM CST
To: svargas@ksu.edu

Yes, please cite the source at the bottom of the figure, wherever you got the figure.

--

Sylvia Hurtado
Professor
3005 Moore Hall, 405 Hilgard Ave.
University of California
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521
        (310) 825-1925

On Tue, Jan 26, 2010 at 3:14 PM, Sonia Esquivel <svargas@ksu.edu> wrote:
Hello Dr. Hurtado!

I am writing requesting your permission to use your figure on *Campus Racial Climate* for my dissertation use.

Thanks!

Sonia

Appendix B - Institutional Review Board Application

Approval

K·STATE
Kansas State University

University Research
Compliance Office
203 Fairchild Hall
Lower Mezzanine
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785-532-3224
Fax: 785-532-3278
http://urco.ksu.edu

TO: Kay Ann Taylor   Proposal Number: 4752.1
           Secondary Education
           323 Bluemont

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
           Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: July 14, 2009

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Latino Students' Perceptions of their Sense of Belonging
           at a Midwestern Institution: Mi Casa Es Su Casa … or is it really?."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for <u>one year</u> from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."**

APPROVAL DATE: July 14, 2009

EXPIRATION DATE: July 14, 2010

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated **"continuing review" of the research**. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. **If continuing IRB approval is <u>not</u> granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.**

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

         ☒   There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
         ☐   There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Appendix C - Consent Form

Subject: Consent Form to Participate in the study titled, "Latino Students' Perceptions of Their Sense of Belonging at a Kansas State University: Mi Casa es su Casa . . . Or
       is it Really?

Dear Kansas State UniversityState Latino/a Student,

        This research project seeks to illuminate the personal experiences of Latino/a students at Kansas State UniversityUniversity through personal recollections gathered during in-depth interviews. It will provide insight into changes in education for Latino/a students at Kansas State University. It is expected that parallels to and/or contrasts of your experiences at Kansas State University will emerge that reflect educational circumstances nationally for Latino/as during the time period revealed. Particular areas of interest for the research include experiences that you find unique to being a Latino/a, both academic and social instances of sense of belonging, feeling of comfort, and positive influences that may have made you feel part of the Kansas State Universityfamily.
        It is my hope that your participation, sharing your recollections and thoughts about your educational experiences, will offer a valuable dimension to this study by contributing to the growing body of literature about Latino/as' educational experiences.
        It is estimated each interview will take about 90 minutes to collect information. This session will be recorded and transcribed for my dissertation. The data collected will be protected during the research and destroyed after three years as per IRB protocol. The results of this interview will provide important information about our campus climate and will enable us to improve the environment for working and learning at Kansas State University. Your participation and responses are confidential. Please answer the questions as openly and honestly as possible. After completion of the study, all paper and files will be destroyed after three years, unless you agree to allow your research to be kept for future publishing purposes only. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. You will be asked to review the manuscript representing the accuracy of your views and make corrections if needed.
        Feel free to contact the Office of Research and Compliance at 785-532-3224, or email them at comply@ksu.edu their office is located 203 Fairchild Hall, and the office hours are M-F, 8-5 p.m. You can also contact the Assistant Dean of Student Life at the Office of Student Life in 102 Holton Hall, 532-6432.
        Your signature at the bottom of this page indicates your consent to participate in this study. You may refuse to answer any questions or discontinue the interview process at any time. You may withdraw your consent to participate without any repercussions. Again, you are under no obligation to do this and information gathered will be kept confidential.
        Thank you for your time and consideration in assisting me with my dissertation research. It is people like you that will make a difference for future Latino/as at Kansas State University. If you have any questions about this research, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Sonia Esquivel

Doctoral Candidate
BH 013
College of Education
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66503
785-532-5524
svargas@ksu.edu,
Major Professor: Dr. Kay Ann Taylor

_____   _____

Signature of Major Professor   **Date**

By virtue of my signature below, I indicate my consent to participate in the above-

described research project:

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   **Date**

Adapted from Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Rankin, S.R., & Reason, R.D. (2005). Differing perceptions: How students of

color and white students perceive campus climate for underrepresented groups.

Journal College Student Development, 46, 43-61.

Appendix D - Preliminary Interview Protocol

Academic Environment

Classroom Interactions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. How would you describe the classroom interactions that occur among students during your class? Please identify the class to which you refer.

2. How would you describe White and Latino students' comfort levels when interacting with each other during your class? Identify which class.

3. How comfortable are you in interacting with students who are a different ethnicity than you?

4. Have you experienced and/or observed any situations that you'd describe as instances of discrimination or unfairness during any of your classes? If so, please explain. Identify the class.

5. How many people like you are in your classes and how does that make you feel?

Faculty Interactions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. How would you characterize or describe the faculty/student interactions that occur during your classes?

2. Would you please describe your one-on-one interactions with professors outside of class?

3. What makes some professors more approachable than others?

4. What courses (or instructors/professors) encourage you to engage in classroom discussions?

5. Have you felt respected by your peers/professors? Yes/no- please give examples.

6. Have you experienced and/or observed any situations involving any of your professors that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair? Yes/no, please give examples.

7. Is there anything else you would like to add about the faculty and how they make you feel?

Outside the Classroom (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1.How would you describe the environment you live in?

     - How did you decide where to live?

     - How do you feel about off-campus housing?

2. Please describe any situation that you saw as prejudice, discrimination, or unfairness related to your ethnicity in your living environment.

3. Is there a particular group of people on campus or off campus with whom you feel most comfortable? Why or why not?

4. What organizations are you involved in? How often do they meet? Do you always attend? Do you participate?

5. Name any off campus organizations you are part of.

6. How often do you go home? How do you feel when you are home? With friends at home?

Commitment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. How do you feel about your decision to attend this university?

2. Was there ever a time you wanted to leave this university?

3. Tell me if there have been any of your friends who thought about leaving this university and why they left.

4.What motivated you to want to come to this university?

    -Were you recruited? Have you felt valued at this university? Give examples.

    -How did your family feel about you coming to this university?

    -How do you feel about your decision to come to this university?

5. What motivated you to stay at this university?

    -Did anyone influence you to stay? If so, who and please describe

6. How committed are you to staying here?

Graduation (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. How do you feel about graduating from this university?

2. What were your greatest fears about coming to this university to begin with?

3. What have been (if any) your concerns while here at this university?

4.How does your family feel about your graduating?

5. How do you explain to your parents your degree/career?

6. How would you describe the academic advising you have received from freshmen to graduation?

Sense of Belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. Did any faculty/staff encourage/discourage you to go to college in high school?

2. Was it difficult, in your opinion to get to this university? Is it challenging now? Explain.

3. Did you feel welcomed when you first arrived? What kinds of things made you feel welcomed/unwelcomed

4. How welcomed or unwelcomed do you feel now compared to when you first arrived here?

5. How would you describe your interactions with the different student services on campus?

6. How would you describe your level of comfort at this university?

7. Who/what/how has impacted your sense of belonging at this university?

8. Please describe any other things (questions/experiences/perceptions) that you haven't had the chance to talk about during this interview, but which you find important regarding the topic of campus climate and diversity issues here at this university.

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D.F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70*, 324-345.

Appendix E - Interview Questions

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Sonia

Interviewee:

Pseudonym:_____

Introductory/Background questions:

1) Gender: female

2) Age_____ Birth Order_____

3) Birth place_____/ raised _____

4) Length of time living in this state?

5) Where did you graduate high school?

6) Where did you live before coming to this state? Or have you always lived in

this state?

7) Academic Standing: Freshman____ Sophomore___ Junior ___ Senior___

8) Academic Major: _____ _____

9) Academic grade point average_____

10) Do you speak any other language other than English? If so which language?

11) Did you transfer to this university? Yes_____ or No_____

- If so, how was the transition?

-If not, how were your early experiences when coming here?

Academic Environment

Classroom Interactions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. How would you describe the classroom interactions that occur among students during your classes?

> (Probes: Do you feel a part of your classes? Do other students make you feel welcomed? Please explain without revealing any identities.)

2. How would you describe White and Latino students' comfort levels when interacting with each other during your classes**?**

3. How comfortable are you in interacting with students who are a different ethnicity than you?

4. Have you experienced and/or observed any situations that you'd describe as instances of discrimination or unfairness during any of your classes? If so, please explain without revealing any identities**.**

5. How many people like you are in your classes and how does that make you feel?

 Faculty Interactions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. How would you characterize or describe the faculty/student interactions that occur during your classes? (Probe: How do professors and students speak to each other?)

2. Would you please describe your one-on-one interactions with professors outside of class? (Probes: Do you feel comfortable approaching your professors? Why or why not?)

3. What makes some professors more approachable than others?

4. How have you been encouraged to engage in classroom discussions?

5. Have you felt respected by your peers/professors? Yes/no, please give examples. (Probes: How does that make you feel? Have they valued your opinions/presence? Do your professors ever praise you? How?)

6. Have you experienced and/or observed any situations involving any of your professors that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair? Yes/no, please give examples without revealing any identities.

7. Is there anything else you would like to add about the faculty and how they make you feel?

Outside the Classroom (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1.How would you describe the environment you live in?

      - How did you decide where to live?

      - How do you feel about off-campus housing?

2. Please describe any situation that you saw as prejudice, discrimination, or unfairness related to your ethnicity in your living environment.

3. Is there a particular group of people on campus or off campus with whom you feel most comfortable? Why or why not?

4. What organizations are you involved in? How often do they meet? Do you always attend? Do you participate?

5. Name any off campus organizations you are part of.

6. How often do you go home? How do you feel when you are home?

Commitment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. How do you feel about your decision to attend this university?

2. Was there ever a time you wanted to leave this university? If so, please tell me about it. (Probe: What made you change your mind?)

3. Tell me if there have been any of your friends who thought about leaving this university and why they left.

4.What motivated you to want to come to this university

-Were you recruited? Have you felt valued at this university? Give examples.

     -How did your family feel about you coming to this university?

     -How do you feel about your decision to come to this university?

5. What motivated you to stay at this university?

     -Did anyone influence you to stay? If so, who and please describe.

6. How committed are you to staying here?

Graduation (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

1. How do you feel about graduating from this university?

     - Are there other relatives who graduated from a university?

2. What were your greatest fears about coming to this university to begin with?

     (Probe: How did you overcome them to lead you to graduate?)

3. What have been (if any) your concerns while here at this university?

(Probe: What resources on campus/off campus did you find useful?)

4.How does your family feel about your graduating?

5. How do you explain to your parents your degree/career?

6. How would you describe the academic advising you have received from freshmen to graduation?

Sense of Belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997)

4. Did any faculty/staff encourage/discourage you to go to college in high

school? Yes/no, please describe without revealing any identities (verbal,

notification of opportunities, workshops, etc.**)**

5. Was it difficult, in your opinion to get to this university? Is it challenging

now? Explain.

6. Did you feel welcomed when you first arrived? What kinds of things made

you feel welcomed/unwelcomed? (e.g., welcome week, group activities)

(Probe: Is there a place on campus that makes you feel at home? A group

or organization?)

4. How welcomed or unwelcomed do you feel now compared to when you first

arrived here?

5. How would you describe your interactions with the different student services

on campus?

(Probes: Have you connected with certain staff from any offices?)

6. How would you describe your level of comfort at this university?

(Probe: 1 being not comfortable at all and 10 being extremely

comfortable)

7. Who/what/how has impacted your sense of belonging at this university?

(Probe: What makes you feel a part of this university?)

8. Please describe any other things (questions/experiences/perceptions) that you

haven't had the chance to talk about during this interview, but which you find

important regarding the topic of campus climate and diversity issues here at this

university

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D.F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the

campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology

of Education, 70*, 324-345.

Appendix F - Email Requesting Participation in Study

Dear Kansas State UniversityState Latino/a Student,

You have received this email because according to the Registrar's Office you are Hispanic/Latino. I am a doctoral candidate interested in the personal experiences of Latino/a students at Kansas State University through personal recollections gathered during in-depth interviews. It will provide insight into changes in education for Latino/a students at Kansas State University. Particular areas of interest for the research include experiences that you find unique to being a Latino/a, both academic and social instances of sense of belonging, feeling of comfort, and positive influences that may have made you feel part of the Kansas State UniversityState family.

At least one individual, in-depth interview will be approximately 90 minutes. The information you provide will be kept confidential and you will be assigned a pseudonym. If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to this email, svargas@ksu.edu. If you have any questions, please contact me directly at 785-209-4089.

Thank you in advance for your participation and for making a difference for our future Latino students at Kansas State University.

Sincerely,

Sonia Esquivel

Doctoral Candidate

College of Education

Kansas State University

Appendix G - Interview Guide

Purpose of the Interview:

To examine the experiences of undergraduate Latino/a students at Kansas State University (Kansas State University) regarding the current campus climate and campus climate specific to diversity issues related to Latino students.

<u>Preliminaries</u>

Introduction: Interviewer introduces self and provides background and ground rules for the student being interviewed as follows:

This project is all about investigating how Latino/a students feel about the sense of belonging at Kansas State University. I am particularly interested in exploring what your in-and-out-of-class experiences were and your perceptions of how you have felt at Kansas State University. I would like for you to take this opportunity to share your thoughts and opinions freely. I am going to spend the next hour and a half asking questions designed to elicit a full picture of your thoughts and feelings. The only ground rules to remember are that there are no right or wrong answers to any of my questions—only your honest opinions. Everything you say will be kept strictly confidential and the results of this interview will be reported anonymously, using pseudo or false names. Please regard the recorder as an extension of my memory. The recording will help me to represent your thoughts accurately in my research report. Is it all right with you

that I record the interview? If at any time you would like me to stop the recorder,

please just let me know. Please respond to questions without revealing any

identities.

Do you have questions before we begin?

Process

The following interview process will be utilized for each of the

interview/discussion questions.

- The interviewer will ask a question
- The student being interviewed will be given as much time as necessary to completely answer each question.
- The interview will utilize probing questions to fully explore the student's answer when necessary.
- Throughout the course of the interview, the interviewer will summarize what she has heard to insure that her understanding of the answer is accurate.

Appendix H - Audit Trail

The following were implemented:

1. Research topic selected,
2. Delineated topic,
3. Searches for resources and literature,
4. Read literature,
5. Summarized resources,
6. Purpose of the study was identified,
7. Research method selected; Phenomenological,
8. Proposal submitted and approved 05/09,
9. Revised research method; Multiple Case Study,
10. Submitted Institutional Review Board Application,
11. Requested list of potential participants from Registrar's Office,
12. July 2009 IRB application was approved,
13. Purposeful sample of 5 recent graduates May 2009/July 2009 for Pilot Study,
14. Interview schedule development for Pilot Study,
15. Pilot Interviews conducted July 2009,
16. Revised research questions,
17. Criterion Sample of Latino undergraduate students,
18. Sent email to 639 students,
19. Purposeful sample,
20. Scheduled interviews July 2009 – September 2009,
21. Consent forms,
22. Interviews,
23. Transcriptions were completed in October 2009,
24. Member Checks / were completed in September - November 2009,
25. Data analysis began,
26. Dissertation defense,
27. Final edits of dissertation.

Appendix I - Guia de Consejeria Academica para la Familia