Latino Student’s Perceptions of the University Campus Climate:
Exploratory Study of First Generation Students

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Claremont Graduate University and
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APPROVAL OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Yvonne Hernandez as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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This study examines Latino student’s impressions of the university campus climate. The over-arching question guiding this study asked: How do Latino first college generation students negotiate the psychosocial, cultural and environmental perspectives of the college experience?

The conceptual framework integrates three major higher education theories: Tinto’s Student Integration Model (1998), Astin’s Input-Environment-Outcome Model (1993), and Scannell & Gifford’s Tripartite Model of Place Attachment (2010). This study documents the perceptions of eight first generation Latino college students from the fall 2010 freshmen cohort, all attended a four-year university in California and were chosen based on the Monzon Risk Factor Matrix. In their first year in college, four respectively resided on-campus and four off-campus.

A qualitative approach was used that incorporated the use of semi-structured interviews, photovoice, and journaling to capture the perspectives of first generation
Latino college students’ interactions with the campus environment. The data was analyzed using a social literacy process and content analysis that allowed students to describe their photos negotiating the campus climate of a university.

The findings of the study point to seven themes that point to how the college students negotiate campus climate and experiences, they include (1) integration to the campus environment, (2) university support, (3) culturally reflective physical environment, (4) size of Latinos on campus, (5) social and cultural needs, (6) opportunities for creating a positive environment for Latinos, and (7) campus tensions. Seven of the descriptors accounted for 61.3% of all student entries, namely, student perceptions of psychosocial tensions, attitude towards the university, and sense of cultural awareness.

The findings point to the influence of race, privilege, cost of education, balancing one’s life, negotiating campus space and identity, the dominant presence of Euro-American culture of the campus, and the lack of inclusion. None of the students noted that living on campus was a contributing factor to increasing their sense of campus place or belonging. Overall, participants noted the importance of being connected to their communities socially, culturally, and politically.

The study suggests a new model for examining student integration through a cultural democracy lens for on campus student support.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Martha Hernandez & Antonio Hernandez for always instilling in me the importance of an education and for always believing in me. I hope I’ve made you proud.

To Pumpkin, the Chihuahua, my always faithful companion. To Milo, my Chihuahua-angel, I miss you my friend.
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CHAPTER ONE
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Background to the Study

A majority of colleges and universities focus solely on structural diversity to create a diverse and welcoming campus climate (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002). However, institutions must understand the needs of underrepresented students that have been historically not a part of the university environment from different backgrounds in order to create proper support mechanisms and to retain these students on campus (Chang, Denison, Saenz & Misa, 2006; Gurin, et al., 2002; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Nuñez, 2009). The campus climate is the environment as it relates to personal and academic experiences a student has and can serve as an important conduit in which to create a welcoming and inclusive place for all students. Campus climate can be contextualized through government policy decisions, socio-historical developments, and institutional contexts (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1999).

Within the context of campus climate there are many historical legacies of exclusion of underrepresented populations in the U.S. higher education system (Hurtado, et al., 1999). A student’s ability to integrate into and create a diverse campus climate is effected by familial, peer-to-peer, and faculty experiences (Terenzini, 1993). For the purposes of this study a diverse campus climate is considered the inclusion of historically underrepresented students in higher education. All of these facts can determine a student’s ability to persist to graduation. Many universities miss the opportunity to create an inclusive campus climate by simply utilizing enrollment numbers as a sole indicator of increased campus diversity (Gurin, et al., 2002). While structural diversity is important, it is also necessary for all students to have intentional and
structured sociocultural interactions to discuss differences and gain socio-cultural competencies (Gurin, Nagada & Lopez, 2004). Furthermore, it is important for administrators to understand and to contribute to the larger scope of higher education decisions and policies that can aid or hinder student diversity and its impact on establishing culturally welcoming campuses.

Racial differences and family history of college attendance must also be considered in creating an inclusive campus. Studies regarding the kindergarten through twelfth (K-12) education system show there is a discrepancy between students’ generational status and the ability to access the social capital inherent in a college education (Nuñez, 2009). Social capital is considered the knowledge needed to apply to and navigate the higher education environment. For those who continue to postsecondary education, there are generally a lot of negative predictions associated with ability to succeed and the likelihood of integration into the campus environment as related to ethnicity and socioeconomic background (Nuñez, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to contribute to existing research regarding Latino first college generation students, specifically their interaction with and feelings about the college campus climate. Most of the existing published research focuses on racial differences that are quantitative in nature, using large data sets. This study attempts to fill the gap in existing research by telling the students’ story through journals and photographs that allow the reader to walk in their shoes and experience what they see and feel within the campus environment on a day-to-day basis.

This study focused on first generation Latino college experiences within the postsecondary campus climate in southern California as this region has one of the highest concentrations of Latinos in the country. This study documents the experiences of Latino first generation students as they navigate higher education. In addition, this study demonstrates
perceptions students have about the environment in order to assist students in their retention and persistence to graduation. Participants were chosen based on Monzon’s Risk Factor Matrix (Rivera & Monzon, 2013), which characterizes college readiness based on the California State University’s (CSU) guidelines for first time full time enrolled freshmen—see Figure 1.

Using Monzon’s matrix, this study utilized a quantitative data set based on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and high school grade point average (GPA) that categorized students to four college readiness categories: high risk, high medium risk, low medium risk and low risk using the Monzon matrix. The data set was striated based on housing status on campus (i.e. living on campus or off campus fall of 2010). The study catalogued specific data about pre-college experiences including familial relationships and the students’ sense of identity, experiences with the current college environment including sense of belonging and sense of
place, and finally a synopsis of the total college experience, including psychosocial factors such as social integration and sense of self. The study adds new and critical information that allows researchers and practitioners to create more thoughtful student/parent programs, develop dialogue on the merits of living on campus versus commuting from off campus housing and introduces methods that can be used to create a more inclusive campus environment as it relates to Latinos on campus.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to contribute to existing research regarding Latino first college generation students, specifically their interaction with and feelings about the college campus climate. Most of the existing published research focuses on racial differences that are quantitative in nature, using large data sets. This study attempts to fill the gap in existing research by telling the students’ story through journals and photographs that allow the reader to walk in their shoes and experience what they see and feel within the campus environment on a day-to-day basis.

The qualitative nature of this study adds to the existing quantitative body of research in order to create a deeper and richer understanding of educational campus climate and student belongingness. The study contributes to the examination of campus climate and institutional practices, which create student success and engagement. The qualitative data collected in this study can therefore be used to influence university policy as related to financial assistance, housing requirements and outreach programs to better serve Latino first generation college students.
The findings will also allow institutions of higher education to identify areas of psychosocial tensions on campus, methods by which underrepresented students interact with the campus environment, and ways in which the university can create a more welcoming atmosphere for all students. This study and its findings can also be added to in the framework of Lindsey, Robbins and Terrell’s (2009) *Cultural Proficiency, A Manual for School Leaders*, that measures elements of cultural proficiency. The salient elements of cultural proficiency include:

- Value diversity
- Assess culture
- Manage the dynamics of difference
- Institutionalize cultural knowledge
- Adapt to diversity (Lindsay, et al., 2009, pg. 54)

**Research Questions**

The overarching question guiding this research was: How do Latino first college generation students negotiate the psychosocial, cultural, and environment perspectives of the college experience?

1. What are the pre-college experiences that Latino students bring to the university environment relative to familial relationships and support, academic preparedness and their sense of identity that will make them successful?

2. What are Latino students’ perceptions of the university campus climate and in regards to sense of place, sense of belonging and living on campus based on college generation?
3. What are Latino students’ perceptions of the university campus climate in regards to feeling safe and comfortable, sense of social integration and academic achievement based on college generation and housing status?

4. How do Latino students’ perceptions of campus climate influence their awareness to negotiate psychosocial tension, cultural experiences, and academic pursuits?

Each sub-question has particular constructs, data collection methods and coding outcomes based on qualitative methods. Table 1 outlines the approaches taken to actualize this study which includes the research sub-questions, constructs, instruments for data collection, coding and expected outcomes.

Guiding question: How do Latino first college generation students negotiate the psychosocial, cultural, and environment perspectives of the college experience?

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Table 1. Approach of study

**Conceptual Framework**

There are several frameworks that guide research on campus climate and student success.

A majority of the theories in regards to the campus environment have ties to attrition, persistence, and sense of belonging. From the literature, it has become abundantly clear that
none of these areas are independent, but are very much intricately tied to one another. Further complicating matters, many of these frameworks were developed only utilizing Euro-American students and their experiences. Conchas (2006) and Rankin & Reason (2005), assert that colleges today are still very Euro-centric and do not always take into account the experiences of ethnically diverse underrepresented students. Similarly, many colleges ignore the current “racial balkanization” occurring in the K-12 system, which has a profound impact on a student’s sense of belonging and perception of the campus climate (Conchas, 2006; Rankin & Reason, 2005).

The term *racial balkanization* refers to the current re-segregation of K-12 schools that have one predominant ethnic group.

The conceptual framework for this study integrates Tinto’s Student Integration Model (1998), Astin’s Input-Environment-Outcome Model (1993), and Scannell & Gifford Tripartite Model of Place Attachment (2010). Looking beyond Tinto, Astin and Scannell & Gifford, the *Student Integration of the Cultural Democracy on Campus and Support Systems* (Hernandez, 2012) forms the revised conceptual framework for this study, as illustrated in figure 2.
Figure 2. Student integration through cultural democracy on campus and support systems (Hernandez, 2012)

**Tinto’s Student Integration Model**

One of the most widely used theories in studies of campus climate is by Vincent Tinto (1993). His theoretical framework was based on the Student Integration Model (Tinto, 1993; Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora & Hengstler, 1992). This model asserts that a student should integrate with the campus climate only,

“[if there is a] match between an individual’s characteristics and those of the institution shape two underlying individual commitments: a commitment to completing college
(goal commitment) and a commitment to his or her respective institution (institutional commitment)” (Cabrera, et al., 1992, pg. 14).

Since it’s first inception in 1975, Tinto’s work was modified in 1987 & 1993 (Nora, 2001; Nuñez, 2009). The revised Tinto framework asserts that a student’s ability to socially integrate into the campus climate falls strictly on the ability to commit themselves to academics and the institution. Additionally, a student must conform to the institutional norms of the university in order to be successful (Tinto, 1993; Nuñez, 2009). According to Tinto, one of the most important factors in a student’s ability to transition to the established campus climate is based on the notion of severing all ties with their family, high school friends, and former communities (Tinto, 1993; Nora, 2001; Nuñez, 2009). Tinto’s theory does not take into account the experiences and preconceived notions of a student entering college; two facts that can directly effect perceptions of the college community. Tinto posits the importance of a student’s “rite of passage” (Tinto, 1993, pg. 92) and its basis on “life crises” that a human navigates over the course of their lifetime (Tinto, 1993; Nora 2001). The “rites of passage” allow for the student to create distance from the communities of origin and allow for full integration into the college community. It is this area that has caused the most concern among scholars of underrepresented students. In contrast to Tinto, Bean & Vesper (1992) had found that severing ties with their former communities may hinder a student’s ability to transition to the campus climate (Bean & Vesper, 1992, as cited in Nora, 2001).

Some critiques of Tinto’s theory state the theory fails to take into account external influences a student brings to their college experience. Indeed, Tinto fails to acknowledge perceptions of the campus community as a whole and, more importantly, does not take into
account the experiences of underrepresented students (Tierney, 1992; Hurtado, 2005; Nuñez, 2009). A majority of Tinto’s work grouped all students regardless of background into a single category. Tinto also focused on the responsibility of the individual to integrate into the campus climate, but failed to take into account the responsibilities of the collective community and the effects of group dynamics (Tierney, 1992; Hurtado, 2005). Tinto’s framework suggests that academic performance is the best indicator of a student’s integration and success in the campus climate (Cabrera, et. al., 1992). Tinto (1993) posits that an underrepresented student’s inability to become part of a college environment is a direct result of academic unpreparedness. Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn (1999) conversely point out that when students experience an unwelcoming campus climate and perceptions of discrimination or alienation they will not persist (Cabrera, et al., 1999). Cabrera, et al. (1999) Student-Institution Fit model directly conflicts with Tinto’s model in that it is based on “psychological and sociocultural stressors” only experienced by underrepresented students (Cabrera, et al., 1999, pg. 135). These stressers are: “(a) present only among minority students and (b) heighten the feeling of not belonging at the institution with spillover effect on a student’s academic performance” (Cabrera, et al., 1999, pg. 135).

Furthermore, Tierney’s (1992) critique of Tinto points out Tinto’s focus that social integration involves a “rite of passage” by the student. Tierney asserts that the notion of “rite of passage” can be misinterpreted based on cultural beliefs and students will need to conform to the cultural norms of the dominant society in order to participate in the rite of passage (pg. 607). Social integration, therefore, must be looked at more holistically taking into account the external experiences a student brings to campus which directly influence perceptions of the environment.
Astin’s Input-Environment-Outcome Model

Astin (1993) provides a different conceptual framework with which to look at campus climate and its effect on students. Astin uses the I-E-O model as a basis for college student development:

I = Inputs—the experiences the student brings to college.
E = Environment—what a student is exposed to on a daily basis, including, social and academic experiences
O = Outcomes—a student’s characteristics after being exposed to the environment and after they have internalized and conceptualized the college environment with the beliefs that were present at the commencement of college (Astin, 1993, pg. 7).

The I-E-O model provides the conceptual framework in which to look at the environmental and psychological effects on students within the campus climate. Some research on campus climate uses this framework as a secondary point of reference to Tinto and focuses on different environmental experiences, inputs, and how the student conceptualizes an experience in order to create a positive outcome. The I-E-O model is grounded in Astin’s previous work in student involvement theory. Student involvement is the catalyst for which a student persists through college. The theory, (Astin, 1993) includes five postulates:

1. The investment (in physical and psychological energy) a student puts forth in activities associated with school.
2. Involvement is on a continuum.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative components.

4. The amount of time spent with in and out of the classroom experiences directly impacts student involvement.

5. Effectiveness of campus policies can increase student involvement (Astin, 1993, pg. 519)

Astin’s theory is relevant as a student is not able to fully develop and become acclimated if the campus climate feels unwelcoming. Students who are not involved and invested in their experience at the university will not be retained.

Similar to Tinto’s theory, one critique of Astin’s early I-E-O model is that the model did not specify differences among underrepresented students. At the time of his foundational work, many campuses catered to a Euro-American population. In his later work beginning in the 1990’s, Astin began to include multiculturalism and diversity as important inputs a student brings to their college experience.

**Scannell & Gifford Tripartite Model of Place Attachment**

As a secondary theoretical framework, the Tripartite Model of Place Attachment (figure 2) will be used to describe how a physical environment can create an attachment to a space, such as a university, for individuals. Figure 2 shows that place attachment is, “a multidimensional concept with person, psychological process, and dimensions” (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).
This model shows that place attachment can occur at an individual and group level. Among groups, attachment can be based on culture, gender, religion, and have historic value. With individuals, attachment is based on experiences, social symbols, and representations of social arenas. The emotions, behaviors, meanings, and schemas on an individual or group level then affect the attachment to a place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). This theoretical model creates context for how an individual or a group forms attachments and interacts with the campus environment.

**Definition of Terms**
**Academic Achievement:** A minimum 2.0 grade point average on a scale of four with two being satisfactory standing in university course study.

**Academic Preparedness:** The ability to participate in the university’s academic demands as indicated by high school grade point average and SAT composite scores (Monzon, et al., 2010).

**Identity:** Identification with a racial culture, gender, religion, organization and/or group with the ability to articulate what makes each individual different and unique.

**First Generation College Student:** A student who does not have an immediate family member who has completed post-secondary education.

**On-Campus Housing Status:** Living in on-campus residence halls with exposure to a residential education program.

**Off Campus Housing Status:** Commuting from a non-campus location to attend classes.

**Familial Relationships:** Interactions and associations with nuclear or extended family.

**Place attachment:** Sense of attachment and belonging to a culture, gender, religion, or other group on campus. Individual place attachment is often based on experiences, social symbols, and representations of social arenas (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

**Sense of Belonging:** Capacity to feel a part of the campus community.

**Sense of Place:** Adaptation to the campus climate and community, and place attachment at an individual and group level (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

**Sense of Self:** Feelings about the campus climate/environment and the effects on personality, nature or character.

**Social Integration:** The intersection of a student’s sense of belonging, sense of place and sense of self as related to identity and experience in the university campus climate.

**Assumptions of the Study**
The study makes the following guiding assumptions:

1. The population of students from the fall 2010 cohort is representative of the larger population of all Latino college students at the selected CSU institution.

2. Participation in this study by the selected Latino college students was voluntary.

3. A participant’s use of a camera and self-taken pictures through the use of a journaling are representative of the students’ perceptions.

4. The photos taken represent the participant’s lived experience. It is the assumption of this researcher that students in the study have truthfully answered questions and the journaling of the photographs taken were an accurate portrayal of individual experiences with the campus climate.

5. Content analysis is a viable methodological means to analyze and code participants’ photographs.

6. Lastly, the researcher had the cultural sensitivity to respect the voices of the students when interviewing underrepresented people, such as Latino students. Participants must feel their dignity and humanity were intact not only when they told their stories, but when the stories have been represented in research (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003).

Limitations of the Study

While efforts to avoid limitations of this research were practiced, it is important to note the possible limitations of this study:

1. The campus selected in the California State University (CSU) system has a Latino representation of over 25% of students on that campus.
2. Study is exploratory and used one CSU institution. This is the starting point for further research in the area of Latino students and campus climate as a lack of information currently exists.

3. The study utilized only 8 students from the fall 2010 cohort of the selected CSU campus. Experiences of other cohorts may vary significantly based on changes in campus policy and climate.

4. Generalizations of findings are based on the photovoice method of collection of data. The use of visual methodologies may include biases by the subject (photographer) and their decision of whether or not a picture or subject should be captured on film (Crane & Angrosino, 1992). Photos of a physical, social and academic space may not always give an accurate observation and are used to only reflect personal values (Collier & Collier, 1983).

5. Rose (2007) posits that the limitations on content analysis may lie in the use of visual methodology that relies on frequency. Rose cautions that interconnectedness between images may exist without statistical correlations.

This study is organized around seven chapters. Chapter one outlines the statement of the problem and how the study was organized. Chapter two is the literary review of relevant research that supported the need for this study. Chapter three is the methodology and process by which the study was completed. Chapter four consists of study participants’ profiles and answers to the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats). Chapter five is an overview of themes associated with the study and the photovoice analysis. Chapter six summarizes the “story” of each participant in the study and relevant themes from the study. Finally, chapter seven includes an explanation of the conceptual framework was applied in the
study and used to address the research question. The chapter concludes with researcher reflections and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Campus climate can be contextualized through “government/policy decisions, socio-historical, and institutional contexts” (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1999). There are many historical legacies of exclusion of underserved populations in the U.S. higher education system (Hurtado, et al., 1999). A student’s ability to integrate and create a diverse campus climate is effected by familial, peer-to-peer, and faculty experiences (Terenzini, 1993). All of these areas can determine a student’s ability to persist to graduation. Many universities miss the opportunity to create an inclusive campus climate by utilizing only enrollment numbers as a sole indicator of increased campus diversity. While structural diversity is important, it is also necessary for all students to have intentional and structured sociocultural interactions in which to discuss difference and gain cultural competency (Gurin, et al. 2004). Furthermore, it is important for administrators to understand the large scope of decisions and policies that aid and hinder diverse and welcoming campuses.

This study asserts that there are parallels between the experience of students of color and different college generations. While there may be some similarities, this study examines the experiences of Latino students, specifically with regards to college generational status, in order to gain insight on their needs and their role in creating a more inclusive and educationally sustaining campus environment.
The review of the literature provides a context of historical, internal and external influences that affect an underrepresented student’s ability to fully integrate with the campus environment. The examination of the research literature concludes with studies that look at the immigrant student experience specifically.

**External Influences on Campus Climate in Higher Education**

*The Case for Desegregation*

In 1954, the federal government began to enact policies to desegregate the public school system through the legal system as evident in the landmark cases of *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Sweat v. Painter* (Orfield, Bachmeier, James, & Eitle, 1997). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Orders 11246 and 11375 paved the way for what we now know as affirmative action in higher and postsecondary education (Rhoads, Saenz & Carducci, 2005). Case law created a new “face” in higher education, consisting of students of color and women, who, prior to these rulings, were not part of the landscape of campus climate. Up until this point, American colleges and universities were predominantly serving Euro-American males from middle and upper classes (Tierney, 1992). With the Brown Supreme Court decision of 1954 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the notion of separate but equal was no longer an accepted practice in the educational school system (Orfield, et al., 1997; Hurtado, 2005). Separate but equal refers to the concept of services and doctrine being separate by race, but the condition and quality remain equal. Fundamentally, desegregation was intended to remedy historical inequalities faced by people of color (Orfield, et al., 1997). However, desegregation did not occur equally among the differing racial groups. After *Brown*, Black students began to see the largest decrease
in educational racial isolation. However, the Supreme Court did not grant Latino students specific desegregation rights until 1973 under the *Keyes v. Denver School District No. 1* case (Orfield, et al., 1997; Hurtado, 2005). Although considered one of the largest minority groups in the country, Latino students are still the most segregated in the K-12 school system. This is due in large part to the advent of suburbia and “White flight” to the outskirts of urban areas (Orfield, et al., 1997; Hurtado, 2005). White flight is referred to the migration of Euro-Americans due to immigrants or people of color moving into their neighborhoods of residence.

**Re-segregation of Public Schools**

According to the U.S. Census, sixty-three percent of traditionally aged college students (18-24 year olds) are made up of students of color (Price & Wohlford; Orfield, Marin & Horn (Eds.), 2005). In 2006, sixteen percent of these students came from families with an income of less than $20,000 per year and 50% from households of less than $50,000 per year (Price & Wohlford; Orfield, et al. (Eds), 2005). Additionally, urban schools in our nation are now predominately made up of Black, Latino, and East Asian students. Yet, in school communities, there are still marked inequities within the K-12 educational system, especially in urban areas, which has overarching consequences for students of color in higher education. With the marked changes in the public school system, it brings to question how colleges and universities are addressing enrollments and climate (Price & Wohlford; Orfield, et al. (Eds), 2005).

Cases like *Bakke v. University of California* (1978), *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003), and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) (University of Michigan) point to the educational need to create diverse campus climates by admitting students from differing racial and socioeconomic backgrounds (Chang, Denison, Saenz & Misa, 2006; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002; Gurin,
Nagada & Lopez, 2004). However, the Bakke case, in particular, began to question affirmative action policies that guided universities to create more inclusive campus climates through admissions decisions (Chang, et al., 2006; Gurin, et al., 2002; Gurin, et al., 2004; Rhoads, et al., 2005). Gratz and Grutter (2003) also challenged the educational value of purposefully admitting a diverse student body.

In most states of our nation, affirmative action in higher education has been lost or severely watered down due to cases like Bakke. Socially calling for school administrators to take into consideration how the re-segregation of K-12 schools limits the social capital and access of underrepresented students to education; as well as the impact of policy changes at the institutional level with regards to admissions; and its residual effects on the university campus climate (Gurin, et al., 2002; Gurin, et al., 2004). Feagin, Vera, & Imani (1996) assert that, “Segregation in public and private primary and secondary education may contribute to a “[subtle, covert and blatant racism]” that continues to permeate many U.S. colleges in Price & Wohlford; Orfield, et al. (Eds), 2005, pg. 65.

Educational Benefits of Diversity

Diversity on the College Campus

Contemporary literature on campus climate centers around the need to create and sustain diverse learning environments for students of color and Euro-American students alike. In order
to create context, Gurin, et al. (2002) indicated there are four different ways students can be exposed to diversity in the higher education environment. They include, (1) structural (including numbers of students and faculty of color on campus), (2) amount of time exposed to diversity and meaningful interactions, (3) engaging diverse students in academic environments, and (4) educational outcomes fulfilled due to exposure to diverse student populations (Gurin, et al., 2002). These themes emanated from a comparative quantitative study that involved 1,582 students nationally (1,129 Euro-American students, 187 African American students, 266 Asian American students) from the University of Michigan and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (done nationally) at University California Los Angeles that also included 11,383 participants (216 African American, 496 Asian American, 10,465 Euro-American, and 206 Latino students). The aggregate data included only students in their fourth year (Gurin, et al., 2002). The study is significant as it assists scholars in creating the context for campus climate and the benefits of diversity that cannot be achieved without creating and sustaining a presence of diversity on college campuses; and also serves as a follow up on longitudinal studies done in 1985 and 1989 (Gurin, et al., 2002).

Generally, universities have a commitment to “structural diversity” by intentionally increasing the admittance of underrepresented students. However, institutions must also take into consideration the experiences of and effects of structural diversity on underserved students as related to the ability to feel included in the campus environment (Chang, et al., 2006; Gurin, et al., 2002; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Unfortunately, many institutions fall short in efforts to create a welcoming and engaging campus environment for all students. Creating structural diversity is only one piece of the puzzle in creating an inclusive campus climate.
**Intentional Experiences on Campus**

Much of the research with regards to the educational benefits of student diversity cites the need for intentional and quality interactions among students of different ethnic backgrounds (Antonio, 2004; Gurin et al., 2002; Gurin, et al, 2004; Milem, et al., 2005). Denson & Chang (2009) studied 20,178 first time freshman students from 272 institutions on curricular diversity, cross-racial interaction and structural diversity. Their finding suggests that positive educational benefits that come when students are involved with others from different racial backgrounds. Ethnic studies classes, interactions outside of their own racial group, and participating in workshops emphasizing diversity also add to a student’s ability to get along with people of different backgrounds than themselves (Denson & Chang, 2009). This particular study reaffirms the importance of a diverse campus climate. Additionally, the study is generalizable over a large and recent data set. Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini & Pascarella (1999) did a similar study which gave conflicting data indicating students of color are happy in their environment and did not feel the need for increased diversity. However, unlike Denson & Chang, this study did not control for students attending Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU). Therefore, the data from Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini & Pascarella (1999), was limiting and not useful in promoting educational benefits of diversity.

Educational benefits of diversity are seen very quickly in a student’s experience on campus. Hurtado (2005) studied the effects of diversity on second year students. Second year students who are part of a diverse campus climate participate in intentional interactions inside and outside of the classroom and are more likely to show qualities of acceptance of populations that differ from themselves. Hurtado demonstrated how imperative it is for administrators to
create a diverse campus, therefore resulting in immediate educational effects on students (Hurtado, 2005).

Building on her own previous research completed in 1999 this study looks specifically at how social capital and intercultural capital increases the educational effects of diversity on campus. Hurtado’s research indicates that the more cross-cultural experiences students have on campus, the more likely they are able to reduce or “counterbalance” the effects of marginalizing experiences (pg. 42). Thus, study furthers the argument that there are educational benefits associated with increased diversity within the campus community.

Elements of the Campus Climate

Sense of Belonging at the University

At the heart of an inclusive college experience is the notion of feeling a sense of belonging in the institution. Tinto, Bean, and Astin defined belongingness in different ways within the context of their frameworks, however, for all of their differences; sense of belonging remains central to student persistence and campus climate. Strayhorn (2008) defined sense of belonging as “[reflective] of the social support that students perceive on campus; it is a feeling of connectedness, that one is important to others, that one matters” (Strayhorn, 2008, pg. 305). Sense of belonging can be especially problematic for students of color attending elite or predominately White institutions (PWI) (Antonio, 2004; Gurin et al., 2002; Gurin, et al, 2004; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Milem, et al., 2005). Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera (2008) made reference to the American Association of Colleges and Universities thoughts of what makes a university have “inclusive excellence”,

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“(a) a focus on student intellectual and social development; (b) purposeful development and utilization of organizational resources directed at student learning; (c) attention to the cultural differences that learners bring to the educational experience that enhance the educational enterprise; and (d) a welcoming community that engages all of its diversity in the service of student and organizational learning” (AAC&U, 2007 as cited in Locks, et al., 2008, pg. 260).

Creating a sense of belonging and a welcoming campus climate needs to be at the heart of every institutional mission. This not only benefits underrepresented students but the entire student body at large. Locks, et al., (2008) completed a study on the necessity for students to feel a part of the university community and the importance of support for all students, particularly underrepresented students in the second year. As a result of the study, sense of belonging is articulated in the following ways, “interaction with [diverse] peers in a substantive manner, perceived racial tension leads to a reduced sense of belonging on campus, proportion of Euro-American students and frequency of positive interactions with students of color” (Locks, et al., 2008, pg. 277).

At times, sense of belonging for underrepresented students has centered around acclimation and acculturation to the majority culture on campus. The above mentioned theoretical frameworks guiding the study of campus climate indicate that in order for underrepresented students to fully feel a sense of belonging, they must integrate and adopt the values of the majority culture (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tierney, 1992). Hurtado & Carter (1997) explored how students of color are able to navigate between two worlds (university and
cultural group) and how students can negotiate sense of belonging while having multiple identities. The researchers posit that students who are able to create smaller social communities have an easier time navigating the larger university and are able to create a more hospitable campus climate for themselves (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Consistent with Locks, et al (2008), they found that students of color that perceive a hostile environment and do not feel a sense of belonging within the institution are detrimentally affected academically. Hurtado & Carter (1997) also found that the GPA of a student of color does not impact their sense of belonging, as Tinto’s theory suggests. Loo & Rolison (1986) suggest that underrepresented students are significantly more at risk to feel “sociocultural alienation” than Euro-American students. They suggest students of color are more likely to experience this alienation because by and large most campuses are predominately Euro-centric and non-Euro American students feel pressure to reject their own culture in favor of acculturation (Loo & Rolison, 1986, pg. 64).

Effects of Campus Ecology

Feelings of sociocultural alienation can not only permeate a student’s interpersonal relationships, but are also felt in the physical spaces of campus. The literature on campus ecology, specifically, is sparse, therefore the work of environmental psychologists is drawn upon to help create context on the effects of physical space on individuals within the campus climate. Knez (2005) defines the main constructs revolving around person-place identity as the following: (1) place attachment, (2) place identity, and (3) sense of place (Knez, 2005, pg. 208). A person’s psychological attachment to a particular place combined with the perceived climate of said place (Knez, 2005; Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess,
Knez (2005) indicates that *place attachment* involves “social identification” for the individual within the confines of the space. This social identification can be positive or negative attachment based on positive or negative social interactions. *Place identity*, on the other hand, refers to how one feels about themselves and their relationships within a particular place (Knez, 2005). This can include interpersonal connections, memories, and how one might feel about particular objects. *Sense of place* is defined as the physical place, the activities that occur within that space, and psychological meanings that are associated with a particular space (Knez, 2005).

Further research on place attachment indicates that places spark a sense of comfort and individuals tend to have strong psychological ties to these places (Hernandez, et al., 2007). Hernandez, et al. (2007) studied how place attachment can differ geographically among native and non-native individuals to an area. They found that non-native individuals found a stronger sense of identity with a particular area, whether it is the city where they currently reside or the island in which they are originally from. The researchers also pointed out that college students feel the same sense of place attachment if they feel connected, safe, or a similar “cultural framework of reference” within a particular space (Hernandez, et al., 2007).

Scannell & Gifford (2010) created a tripartite organizing framework explaining place attachment. To explain the framework, place attachment is described symbolically on a personal level, whether it occurs as an individual or as a member of a group. Symbolisms can take the forms of cultural, religious, gender, etc. “Place” is how the individual or group connect or interact with a particular space. Finally, “process” includes psychological feelings associated with an area and the behaviors that occur because of present feelings (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).
In Gonzalez’ (2002) study of Chicano students in predominantly White institutions (PWI), he noticed the affects of place attachment on these students as related to their sense of belonging with the campus climate. Gonzalez (2002) defined physical space as campus buildings, sculptures, and other features such as signs and posters. The students in his study felt marginalized by the campus climate due to lack of multicultural symbols in the physical environment. Furthermore, students began to create their own “safe spaces” in their residence hall rooms by playing familiar music and hanging pictures and posters of cultural icons (Gonzalez, 2002). This study demonstrates the applicability of place attachment for underrepresented students within the campus environment.

Student Perceptions of the Campus Climate

Effects of Diverse Environments on Students

Understanding how diverse environments affect students is essential to creating an inclusive campus climate. With more and more high schools becoming increasingly segregated trends towards “racial balkanization,” as used by Rankin & Reason (2005), will have a significant and direct impact on how students will approach and perceive their experiences at the college level (Rankin & Reason, 2005; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen, 1998). For many, colleges and universities serve as students’ first exposure to people of diverse backgrounds. It is critical for administrators to understand that a student’s social experiences on campus can have a direct impact on their identity (Noguera, 2004). Additionally, most underrepresented students are educated in predominately White institutions (PWIs) and there exist perceptions of differential treatment. This treatment can explain why students of color are
not succeeding at the university. It is important for administrators to pay attention to social situations and the role climate plays in student development (Gonzalez, 2002). In the late 1980’s, Astin (1993) began studying how students are affected by diversity on campus. His research was one of the first studies that began to show that the student experience varies greatly between races (Hurtado, 2005). Astin’s study focused on how student outcomes including values, attitude, career plans, and graduate achievement and degree completion are influenced by a multicultural environment. The study yielded four environmental effects influencing campus climate: institutional diversity, faculty diversity, direct student experience with diversity, and campus activism. Astin’s research asked students how their experience at college enhanced their understanding of multiculturalism. Students felt that enhancing diversity on campus had a positive impact on their quality of life, led to greater understanding of others, and more confidence in standing up for the rights of others. When faculty included diverse topics in the curriculum, a positive effect was had on students. Astin’s research, at the time, did not include the impact of diverse faculty on students. A student’s direct experience with diversity in this study was measured by how many courses or workshops a student has attended as related to women’s studies and “cultural awareness” on campus. Students who participated more in these types of workshops and educational opportunities were more likely to consciously encounter students different from themselves and have meaningful conversations about diverse issues and campus climate. These interactions significantly added to a student’s quality of life and increased satisfaction with their college experience. Students also felt empowered and believed they had a direct effect on social change. According to Astin, when students feel this sense of empowerment, they are also more likely to develop political liberalism and participate more in activism on campus (Astin, 1993). Astin is one of the pioneering theorists in student
development theory and on the topic of how the college environment affects students. Hurtado, et. al., (1998), broadened Astin’s research by showing that campus climate can be contextualized in two ways: external and internal (institutional) forces. External forces include case law, governmental policy, and sociohistorical forces. A campus’ legacy of inclusion, structural diversity, and behaviors among different groups of students are seen as internal forces impacting student perceptions of climate (Hurtado, et. al., 1998).

Looking at perceptions of students of color specifically adds a new dimension to viewing campus climate. Davis et al. (2004) utilized a phenomenological approach to find out how Black students perceived their college environment. Participants included 7 women and 4 men aged 22-26 who were nearing completion of their undergraduate degrees. There were four themes that emerged from the study including: unfairness, isolation, difference, and the need to represent all Black students (Davis et al., 2004). These themes demonstrated students’ feelings of inclusion and/or exclusion in their campus environment. Black students felt alienated on campus and could not connect with Euro-American students. Additionally, Black students felt inferior and needed to prove their “worthiness” of being a student on campus. This study used phenomenology as a research method, and demonstrated an ability to gain more of the students’ personal story as compared to the larger longitudinal studies that utilize only quantitative methods (Davis, et al., 2004). With an increase in underrepresented students attending college, it is important to explore how these students navigate and perceive their campus environment (Keller & Tillman, 2008). Do they feel the same alienation? Do they feel excluded like the Black students in the study? What must be at the center of research on immigrant students is how these students view social conformity and the rationalization of day-to-day practices in school and whether these factors impact a student’s perception of the campus environment.

Harper and Hurtado (2007) completed a large-scale focus group study that included 278 Asian, Latino, Black, Native American, and Euro-American participants from predominantly white institutions (PWI) the study looked at perceptions of the campus climate. From this study, six major areas (relevant to this study) emerged, including: students’ perception of the university’s avoidance of issues of race, racial segregation and lack of social satisfaction on campus, legacy of racism on campus, and Euro-American student overestimation of minority student satisfaction and pervasiveness of Whiteness in space, curricula and activities (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Of particular interest from Harper & Hurtado’s (2007) study is how students were able to articulate the “pervasiveness of Whiteness” in all aspects of student life. Underrepresented students, however, were not able to name safe spaces on campus. One fascinating detail that emerged from the study is Euro-American students’ assumption that non-Euro-American students are as satisfied with their experience on campus as they are. Interpersonal relationships can play a large role in how students perceive their campus environment. Antonio (2004) specifically cites the experience of male diverse and homogenous friendship groups. This particular study showed that many students of color, on a subconscious level, want their ethnicity acknowledged. This may explain why some students of color purposefully seek out homogenous groups of friends (Antonio, 2004). This behavior can help to create some semblance of “safe space” for students of color on campus.

Rankin and Reason (2005) looked at how students of color, and Euro-American students viewed campus climate for underrepresented groups. A sample of 7,347 undergraduate students of several ethnic identities were asked their personal experiences, perceptions of the overall
campus climate, and their opinions of campus policies. The study highlights how Euro-American students and students of color experience the university in very different ways. Generally, Euro-American students perceive campus as “nonracist, friendly, and respectful” (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Students of color had a contrasting viewpoint of the climate (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Euro-American students were less likely to have experienced racism or harassment and tended to ignore these incidents when they witnessed being perpetrated upon students of color. Additionally, Hurtado, et al. 1998, administrators must insist that be aware of “embedded benefits” for some populations of students that may still exist on their campus. Embedded benefits include access to meeting space for certain clubs and organizations, equitable Greek housing and facilities, and which groups/activities are a part of the everyday social fabric of campus. This knowledge will allow administrators to strive to provide equal opportunities and create welcoming environments for all students.

Gonzalez (2001) looked at specific elements of campus culture at predominately Euro-American institutions deemed the most detrimental to underrepresented students. His study demonstrated that participants experienced:

1. Lack of adequate racial/ethnic representation in the student body, faculty, and staff.
2. Feelings of alienation when speaking language of origin.
3. No cultural representation in the physical areas of campus.
4. Faculty taught only a Euro-American perspective and not a multicultural one.
According to Gonzalez (2002), students need “cultural nourishment” in all elements of their experience with the campus environment. This nourishment must include inside and outside of the classroom experiences.

These mentioned studies are relevant to all underrepresented groups as the campus climate can have a direct impact on a student’s ability to succeed academically. If the academic environment is perceived as hostile, students may not feel safe or welcome, therefore diminishing the chances of retention in the college. Universities know how to attract diverse population of students, however retention and persistence to graduation are crucial (Gonzalez, 2002). When institutions understand and appropriately address the needs of these students, a multitude of educational opportunities for Euro-American and non-Euro-American students alike will be provided.

**Latino Student Perceptions of Campus Climate**

Many studies have reported that minority students are more likely than Euro-American counterparts to experience feelings of isolation and alienation (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Tierney, 1992; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Orfield, et al., 1997; Gurin, et al., 2002; Gurin, et al., 2004; Hurtado, 2005; Rhoads, et al., 2005; Chang, et al., 2006; Nuñez, 2009). Most of these studies also noted that each racial group has differing experiences with regards to perceptions of campus climate and the ability of that group to transition to college. In this section, Latino students in particular will be highlighted with regards to their specific needs within the university environment.

Latino students feel a great deal of internal conflict and stress while balancing cultural identity and an identity of acculturation in a Euro-centric university system. These students are especially susceptible to demographic inequalities within a college campus (Hurtado, Carter, &
Spuler, 1996). Many Latino students feel pressure to acculturate to Euro-American norms and tend to have more negative viewpoints of the campus climate (Hurtado, et al., 1996; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Gonzalez, 2002; Conchas, 2006). These feelings are caused by lack of structural diversity as well as overt discrimination on campus or by members of the campus community (Hurtado, et al., 1996). Latino students are more likely to feel a heightened sense of sensitivity to the racial climate on campus. If negative feelings about this culture are present, students are more likely to become psychologically stressed, and thus adversely affecting academic success (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Gonzalez, 2002; Conchas, 2006).

Latino students who are able to create meaningful relationships with peers are better equipped to navigate the large university and make smaller communities for them selves. Community building Latino students effectively juggle multiple identities and create a support system which encourage academic excellence (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Conchas, 2006). At times, familial ties may prevent students from creating a bond with the campus community and creating a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2008).

**Conclusion**

Existing literature overwhelmingly indicates that structural diversity is essential to creating an inclusive campus climate for underrepresented and thus Latino students. However, great care must be taken by institutions to create a welcoming campus climate for students of color immediately after (or ideally before) arrival to the university. Researchers and administrators must study not only the experiences of all students of color, but the Latino experience on college campuses. Many studies specifically about Latino student have not been conducted, therefore currently forcing administrators to draw inferences from research about all
students of color. These inferences may or may not accurately portray the needs of Latino students. In studying Latino perceptions of college life specifically, administrators will gain a clearer understanding of how to retain these students until graduation and help create a more positive experience for students during their time in college.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Structural diversity in universities is only one aspect of inclusivity and diversity on campus. “Creating” diversity is also about assessing campus climate and the experience students of color are having while on campus. Proper support mechanisms must be put in place to support these students when they arrive to campus.

The issue of campus climate for students of color, specifically Latino students, is further complicated by college generational status and how campus is perceived before their college career even begins. In many cases Latinos are negotiating two worlds: the community they come from (and their family still resides in) and school. Generally, Latino students have strong bonds to their families and neighborhoods due to religion, family relationships and financial responsibilities (Noguera, 2004). It is important to research how these bonds effects students’ viewpoints of the campus climate. Typically, Latino families view education as the key to upward mobility, and thus instill that specific value in their students (Noguera, 2004). Creating an inclusive campus climate can help students have a more meaningful college experience (Chang, et al., 2006; Gurin, et al., 2002; Milem, et al., 2005; Nunez, 2009).

Research Design

A qualitative research methodology was utilized to address the research question and sub-questions that guided this study. The overarching question guiding this research is: How do Latino first college generation students negotiate the psychosocial, cultural and environmental
perspectives of the college experience? The study is further guided by the following sub-questions:

1. What are the pre-college experiences that Latino students bring to the university environment relative to familial relationships and support, academic preparedness and their sense of identity that will make them successful?

2. What are Latino students’ perceptions of the university campus climate and in regards to sense of place, sense of belonging and living on campus based on college generation?

3. What are Latino students’ perceptions of the university campus climate in regards to feeling safe and comfortable, sense of social integration and academic achievement based on college generation and housing status?

4. How do Latino students’ perceptions of campus climate influence their awareness to negotiate psychosocial tension, cultural experiences, and academic pursuits?

**Study Sample**

The college student population that participated in this study were first time full time freshmen (FTFTF) aged 17 and 18 enrolled in the 2010 fall semester cohort at a mid-sized public research institution located in Southern California, the participating college is part of the California State University (CSU) system. Students were chosen based on the Monzon Matrix of Latino students from the Office of Institutional Research at the selected institution using the reported institutional data on the 2010 fall semester cohort.

The participants of the study were identified using the Monzon’s Risk Factor Matrix (2010) based on the selected California State University (CSU) campus patterns of college
readiness in SAT scores. Figure 3 depicts how high school grade point average and SAT scores were used to characterize college readiness. Furthermore, the data set is additionally divided based on the student’s campus housing status.

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<tr>
<th>Risk Factor Matrix</th>
<th>SAT Comp</th>
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<tr>
<td>College Readiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-College Ready</td>
<td>College Ready</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Low Medium Risk</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Off Campus SAT Comp: M=1066   SD=103</td>
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<tr>
<td>On Campus SAT Comp: M=924   SD=111</td>
<td>On Campus SAT Comp: M=1108   SD=107</td>
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<tr>
<th>High Medium Risk</th>
<th>Low Risk</th>
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<tr>
<td>Off Campus SAT Comp: M=893   SD=84</td>
<td>Off Campus SAT Comp: M=1085   SD=96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Campus SAT Comp: M=968   SD=84</td>
<td>On Campus SAT Comp: M=1117   SD=101</td>
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Figure 3. Risk factor matrix SAT Comp

Sixty-four open invitations were sent to students within the institutional data set for the 2010 fall semester cohort that matched the Risk Factor Matrix, 16 for each quadrant. Sixteen students were selected to participate: four from each quadrant of the Risk Factor Matrix; two of the four from each of the quadrants would be living on campus and two would be living off campus. Each quadrant was defined by the incoming student’s composite score on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and high school grade point average. The SAT was
administered by the Educational Testing Service. The matrix provides the designation average of each student’s verbal and math scores (The College Board, 2011).

**Study Participants**

From the sixteen students selected for the study, eight selected to actualize the study. The eight students who participated in this study were all Latino students and represented each of the four quadrants of the Monzon risk factor matrix. A male and female student was represented within each of the quadrants in order to gain a better understanding of the differences in perception of campus climate between men and women; as well as students who lived on campus versus off campus during their freshman year fall 2010. Each of the students identified as Latino; 2 students who participated in the study were also considered AB 540 students; otherwise known as undocumented students. The State of California grants undocumented students under AB 540 as “eligible to pay in-state tuition if they attend 3 years of high school, graduated from a California school, and filing an affidavit with the university promising to apply for residency” (retrieved from: http://www.calstate.edu/pa/clips2007/april/17april/aid.shtml). It was not anticipated to include AB 540 students into the study, however, their perspectives added richness to the stories of the Latino experience on campus that were unexpected.

**Instrumentation**

Three data collection approaches were incorporated in this study consisting of descriptive quantitative and qualitative data utilizing photovoice, semi-structured individual interviews, and journals. The Office of Student Testing and Research at the university provided a list to this researcher of Latino students who were Latino/a from the fall 2010 cohort of first-year students.
The list was further segregated into students who lived on campus their first year or commuted to campus their first year, and high or low risk academic students (based on the requirements for admission as dictated by the California State University). The student information the lists included name and email of each participant.

Before meeting with participants, interview questions and protocols were developed in order to streamline the interview process and gain the most valuable information needed to answer the major research question and sub-questions. Study participants (i.e., university students) on the lists were contacted via email. Through email, the prospective study participants were briefly introduced to the purpose of the study, the components of the study, and the time requirements. If a potential participant responded to the email, the participant and researcher found a mutually convenient meeting time and location on campus to thoroughly discuss the requirements of the study and conduct the initial meeting. The initial meeting with participants consisted of completion of the informed consent document and further explanation of the voluntary nature of the study, collecting demographic information, completion of the initial questionnaire; SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of the campus environment, distribution of the study materials (digital camera, paper notebook and photograph and publicity release form; and scheduling of future meetings.

The Informed Consent Form (see appendix A) provided specific information about the study including a thorough description including meetings the participant was asked to attend and materials to be used in the study. The demographic information that was collected from each of the participants using a series of questions:

1. Did your mother/female guardian attend college?

2. Did your father/male guardian attend college?
3. Did you live on campus your first year of college?

4. Do you identify as Latino/a?

5. What is your age?

6. Are you 18 years of age?

This researcher recorded by hand all of the responses by the participant. The information collected thus far was then used to determine if the participant met the characteristics needed for the study.

An initial meeting questionnaire was given to participants consisting of preliminary questions about their perceptions and feelings of the campus climate in the areas of sociocultural alienation, university support, and ethnic representation. The initial meeting questions were based on Loo & Rolison’s (1986) study of ethnic minority students at a predominantly Euro-American university. The participants were provided with response options (i.e. a lot, a little, or not at all). The following questions were included in the initial questionnaire:

1. To what extend do the values at [this university] reflect your own values?

2. How often do you feel socially isolated?

3. To what extent do you feel integrated into the [university’s] community?

4. In terms of social and cultural needs, do you feel minority students on campus face difficulties?

5. Have you ever felt like dropping out of this university?

6. In general, do you feel that [this university] is supportive or non-supportive of minority or immigrant students on campus?

7. Do you feel there are student organization options that reflect your cultural values?
8. Do you feel there are adequate opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships with students who are different than you are?

9. Do you feel that [this university] has policies that are supportive of minority or immigrant students on campus?

10. Do you feel there are statues, buildings, signs, etc. on campus that represent you culturally?

11. Would you favor increasing, decreasing, or keeping the same percentage of minority and immigrant students on campus?

12. Have you found it easy or hard to make friends here at [this university]?

A SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) assessment that evaluates a person’s opinion about an organization based on the four above mentioned criteria was done with study participants in order to serve as a catalyst to initiate critical thoughts about the campus environment. These responses were later used to assist the researcher to extract information from the photovoice portion of the study. The purpose of completing the SWOT analysis was to generate information about an organization in order to then create future goals and objectives for that organization. The data captured during this portion may be valuable to university administrators when creating a more inclusive campus environment. The questions were open-ended and conversational in nature. Responses were not voice recorded and the researcher recorded the responses by hand in order to create a less formal environment during the initial meeting. The questions were tailored to the study but broadly based on the concept of SWOT analysis. The questions were as follows:

1. What are [the university’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?
2. What are [the university’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?

3. What are some opportunities [the university] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it) to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?

4. What are some threats that [the university] should be aware of or that are currently taking place on campus that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?

During the initial interview the participants were introduced to the concept of photovoice and learned with photovoice is, how to use the method, and what can be learned through photovoice. Participants given study materials which included a digital camera (equipped with batteries and a memory card) and a paper notebook with the following prompt taped to the inside cover of the notebook:

“Take pictures that illustrate your impressions of the university environment in regards to campus climate, social integration, sense of belonging, sense of campus attachment and sense of self.

For each picture, please pick one of the prompts below and write a quick reflection on each individual picture you take in the notebook provided. Feel free to use any of the prompts as many times as you like. You can also use multiple prompts for an individual picture.

Prompts:

• In my eyes you see...

• I stand in a place where...
Participants were asked to take eight to ten photos utilizing the digital camera to capture their perceptions of the campus environment. The photos, journals and photo elicitation interview responses addressed the main research question and sub-questions. Prior to distributing the digital camera, this researcher provided directions on how to operate the camera, including how to focus, zoom in and out of photographs and save photos. Participants were also given a Photograph and Publicity Release Form (appendix B) and were asked to have anyone who could be easily identified in photographs sign the form, indicate the reasons the photos were taken, and how their likeness was used.

The photovoice method collected Latino students’ perceptions of the campus climate. Latino students’ perceptions were captured using visual images that were an important part of daily life for these college students and were expressive of the environment in which the subject interacted with daily. Visual methodologies are just one tool for a social scientist to use in order to gain access into the lives of their subjects. Unlike traditional interviews, those conducted with photos can unlock a deeper, more complex feeling and understanding from the participant in order to gain more information about the social issues being studied. Knowles & Sweetman (2004) posit that photographs have a larger breadth of knowledge than written and spoken word and can be “unique sources of evidence in social science research (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004; Rose, 2007).

For this study the essential methodology was the use of photovoice; a form of participatory action research with theoretical underpinnings in critical consciousness, feminist
theory and nontraditional approaches to documentary photography (Wang, 1999). Photovoice allows for a participant in a study to show how they view the world around them without the use of language or writing. Photovoice allows the opportunity for critical dialogue between researcher and participant when discussing the photos allowing/encouraging a participant can share their story. Wang (2009) illustrates the three main goals of photovoice,

“…to enable people (1) to record and reflect their personal and community strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through group discussions of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers (pg. 185).”

Wang further explained about her experiences utilizing photovoice to allow Chinese village women the opportunity to photograph their experiences with health and work in their community without the need for a shared language or writing. This technique allowed the researchers to empower the village women to share their “real” stories, which differed tremendously from propaganda created by the government of an inaccurate portrayal of their experience. According to Wang (1999) there are five key concepts to the use of photovoice,

“Concept 1: Images teach
Images contribute to how we see ourselves, how we define and relate to the world, and what we perceive as significant or different.

Concept 2: Pictures can influence policy
By analyzing the production of the images, the reception of the images and the
meanings attributed to them by audiences, and the content of the images themselves influence our focus and our worldview.

**Concept 3: Community people ought to participate in creating and defining the images that shape healthful public policy**

Photovoice is a technique that involves providing people with cameras so that they can create the images that help shape healthful public policy. The process also requires that people define those images and discussing the images they produced in order to give meaning to their images.

**Concept 4: The process requires that planners bring to the table from the outset policymakers and other influential people to serve as an audience for community people’s perspectives**

The potential for using photovoice as a tool to influence policy resides in the exchanges among community people and policymakers over the images of interest.

**Concept 5: Photovoice emphasizes individual and community action**

Practitioners in the social sciences and health professions have used photovoice alone or in combination with surveys, focus groups, nominal group process, and other methods, but an important characteristic of the photovoice approach unique among such methods is its emphasis on individual and community action” (pg. 186-187).
Similarly, Collier & Collier (1983) coined the term “visual anthropology” as another way for researchers to define the social constructs subjects interact with on a daily basis. Rose (2007) affirms that utilizing photos as a research method includes three important areas: “information-affect-reflection”. For Rose (2007), photography as a research method can fall into one of two groups; (1) subordinated, in which photos are translated by the researcher, and answer a specific research question or (2) excessive, in which photos supplement what a researcher already believes about a specific topic.

Rose (2007), also outlines the different types of visual methodologies that can be used as part of a research study:

1. **Compositional Interpretation**-this involves the interpretation of describing paintings. Its focus is on spatial differentiation, spatial organization, color, texture, light, expression, and content. Essentially, all of these areas summarized is composition and is used to describe visual impact of an image.

2. **Content Analysis**-has a very distinct methodological practice with explicit ways in which to interpret an image. Unlike compositional interpretation, which relies heavily on the researchers’ ability to deconstruct and appreciate a work of art, content analysis more clearly quantifies an image. Content analysis specifically involves quantifying photographs through a set of codes that are central to the research question. Content analysis relies on the frequency of particular elements of a photograph, analyzing the frequencies, coding, and finally looking at how the frequencies compare to or represent the central research question (Rose, 2007).
3. Semiotics-analysis done with this methodology involves breaking down images and decoding them within the context of social media and how these images influence society.

4. Discourse Analysis I-at the individual level is used to analyze individual images that impact social views of the world.

5. Discourse Analysis II-at the institutional level is used to analyze images representing social institutions and it’s impact on society (Rose, 2007).

The photovoice method includes semi-structured individual photo elicitation interviews. Prior to the participant leaving the initial interview the interviewer, scheduled a 60 to 90-minute photo elicitation interview to collect the camera, collect the journal and to discuss the photos. The location was of the participant’s choosing. The interviews included an audio recording and supplemented by handwritten notes. Permission was asked prior to taping the interviews. All audio recordings were transcribed for later coding. The semi-structured photo elicitation interview was used to ask the participant to describe their impressions of each photograph taken; appendix C includes an example of one of the transcribed interviews. During the last and third phase of the photo elicitation interview, students reflected upon their written notes supporting each photograph and asked if they feel what they wrote accurately represents each photograph. Additional open-ended questions were asked to ascertain their impressions and opinions about sociocultural alienation, university supportiveness, and ethnic representation.

*Semi-Structured Individual Interviews*

Photo-elicitation interviews add the discussion of photographs into the research interview (Rose, 2007). The use of photographs during the course of an interview can elicit additional
experiences that may not have been thought of by the subject; additionally, can provoke deeper feelings about a topic that might not have otherwise been captured (Rose, 2007).

Holstein and Gubrium (2003) posit that interviews have the ability to capture data by asking respondents to talk about their lives. When interviewing underrepresented people it is important to take into account the effects of conventional interview techniques. Standardized procedures can be problematic when used during interviews with special populations (Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Parker 2003) (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). When interviewing underrepresented populations, especially about the topics of race or immigration, it is important to take into account the interviewees’ experiences revolving around how their stories have been portrayed historically or in the media (Dunbar, et al., 2003), Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). If an interview begins with an element of distrust and the participant is concerned about how their story will be portrayed after the interview has ended, the answers may be compromised and not as authentic (Dunbar, et al., 2003, Holstein & Gubrium, 2003).

Dunbar, et al. (2003) discuss the role reflexivity plays when interviewing underrepresented populations. Reflexivity provides the researcher an opportunity to include narratives of their own experiences within the confines of the data analysis that may mirror the experiences of the interviewee. Self-disclosure on part of the researcher can also assist during the interview process itself by showing the subject that they share a common experience (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). This common experience can evoke further details within an interview that may not have been brought to light. Dunbar, et al. (2003) also point out that the researcher does not necessarily need to be from the same background or ethnicity as the interviewee, but must gain trust and be willing to self disclose their experiences. Students were asked about each photograph and specifically their impressions of each photo using open-ended
questions, such as, “tell me what is going on in this photograph?” and “what is the main issue or activity depicted in the photograph”.

Journaling

Journaling was used as a research method based on Carspecken’s approach to Critical Qualitative Research, as referenced in his book Critical Ethnography in Educational Research (1996). Carspecken’s method allows for understanding of the human experience in relation to culture and social structures, which is ideal for this type of research (Carspecken, 1996; Hardcastle, et.al., 2006). In particular, journaling under this method allows the researcher an opportunity to gain an “understanding between power, thought, and truth claims, [and] the examination and articulation of researcher bias and the discovery of researcher value orientations” (Carspecken, 1996, pg. 23; Harcastle, et.al., 2006). Carspecken’s (1996) five stages are as follows:

1. Building a primary etic record: What is going on?
2. Researcher interpretation, etic perspective
3. Dialogical data generation, collaborative stage
4. Describes systems relations to broader context
5. Explain relational systems

The first three stages of the method allow for the subject to be more conscious of practices by being more observant in the environment and to reflect on their role within the environment. This approach complemented the use of photography as it allowed the participant to take pictures
of the environment and then begin journaling/reflecting on social setting, behavior, or culture of what is happening in the photos (Carspecken, 1996; Hardcastle, et.al., 2006). The method also allows the participant to analyze “social interactions, routines, roles and power relations” (Hardcastle, et.al., 2006, pg. 5). Stages four and five of Carspecken’s method allow the participant an opportunity to take specific observances they reflected on in a journal entry and photo and apply it to the broader context of psychosocial tensions in the environment (Carspecken, 1996; Hardcastle, et.al., 2006,).

Wang (1999) recommends that a participatory analysis of the photos be done through a journaling by each participant. Participation analysis involved two stages: selecting and contextualizing. Selecting involves participants leading a discussion utilizing interview questions to expand on the significant parts of the photographs they have taken. Contextualizing, stage two, is the storytelling that takes place through the journal entries (Wang, 1999).

Field Testing

In preparation for the dissertation study, the investigator conducted a pilot study to specifically test the photovoice methodology, due to the experimental nature of this qualitative measure. The pilot study was conducted at a mid-sized university located in southern California. The university is the third largest in the State of California and is considered a flagship of the California State University system. This institution has approximately 35,000 graduate and undergraduate students and is ranked sixth in the nation for the most bachelor’s degrees awarded to minorities. The campus has a vibrant student life with over 200 clubs and organizations and offers a residential life program that can house 4500 students.
Photographs were taken by the participants in the pilot study in order to gather facts about the campus environment reflecting on the social interactions the student has at a medium-sized campus in southern California. Photographs can be an effective method from which to gather information about the campus ecology and cultural geography that first, second, and third-generation immigrant students must navigate on a day-to-day basis. As Blumer (1969) noted,

“Psychical accretions give meaning to objects by how the person views that object. It has constituent elements such as, feelings, ideas, memories, motives, and attitudes. The perception of a thing is important in analyzing the meaning of an object for an individual” (Blumer, 1969, pg. 4).

The intent of the pilot study was for the photographs to be evaluated for symbolic interactionism between the person and their environment. One of the central concepts of symbolic interactionism that is also central to this study is, “[that] social acts, whether individual or collective, are constructed through a process in which the actors note, interpret, and assess the situations [objects] confronting them” (Blumer, 1969, pg.50). Personal interviews were also utilized to gather meaning from the subjects’ photographs and to supplement the information gathered through the pictures. Douglas (1998) served as a prototype for this pilot study.

Utilizing content analysis, the interviews and photographs were utilized to deconstruct meanings and record those meanings via a qualitative coding system to quantify the images, journal entries, and interviews.

The pilot study proved to be beneficial, as it allowed the researcher to understand the best use of the equipment needed for the dissertation study. After receiving participant feedback
from the pilot study, it was determined the use of digital cameras would be most beneficial versus the use of disposable cameras used during the pilot study. It allowed participants to focus on scenery and to take sharper photos. The pilot also helped the investigator learn the best strategies to get richer participant responses during the interview process. Lastly, the investigator learned more about the possible limitations of the photovoice methodology and how to prevent bias in the data.

Data Organization and Analysis

The demographic questions, initial interview questions, SWOT analysis, photographs, journals and photo elicitation interviews yielded a large amount of data. The demographic questions, initial questions and SWOT analysis were utilized to create a profile of each of the participants in order to give background information on past and current experiences with the university campus environment. The photographs, journals, photo elicitation interviews were coded based on major themes and relationships among the data. According to Rose (2007), coding categories must be (1) exhaustive, (2) exclusive, and (3) enlightening. Coding categories can assist in creating some quantitative data, including descriptive and frequency, to quantify the qualitative interview data that may be gathered in addition to the photographs. Codes must have a connection to the central research question (Rose, 2007). Miles and Huberman (1994) demonstrated a way to code for qualitative data. Like Rose (2007), Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that analyzing qualitative data is the process to interpret meaningful patterns from the data that is collected. Specifically, Miles and Huberman (1994) focus on “three major phases of data analysis: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification” (pg. 10). Using
the Miles and Huberman method of data coding allows the researcher an opportunity to create some codes before the start of data collection based on the conceptual framework, research questions, and variables developed by the researcher (Basit, 2003). Data reduction is the process in which data can be organized and reduced. With large amounts of data, it is important to minimize and see how the data correlates with the research question and conceptual framework. Data display is the process in which a researcher takes data and creates visual flow charts, maps, and paths in order to see “systematic patterns and interrelationships” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pg. 30). Conclusion drawing and verification is one of the final steps in qualitative data research. According to Miles and Huberman, “the meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their ‘confirmability’- that is, their validity” (pg. 11). It is an opportunity to “generate meaning” from the data through patterns and themes, as well as contrasts and comparisons (Miles and Huberman, 1994, pg. 245). Implementing the Miles and Huberman coding strategy allows for a researcher to draw more concrete conclusions from qualitative data.

The voice recordings from the photo elicitation interviews were professionally transcribed and were completed within 5-7 days of the interview. All transcriptions were received in a Microsoft Word program and printed for ease in coding and organization. For example of a photo elicitation interview see appendix C.

Dedoose and Content Analysis

To further describe attributes of the seven themes, as perceived by the eight first generation college going Latino students, Content Analysis procedures and Dedoose was used to undertake the identification of indicators that further described the seven
themes of the study. The findings of this process are found in Chapter 6.

Content analysis is a process for identifying and summarizing qualitative data and a general rubric of qualitative analysis used primarily in the social sciences. Based on the collected data entries the technique calls for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. Dedoose is a software program for qualitative data analysis that allows the researcher to import and export data on observations and manage data to explore its multiple perspectives of the participants’ data entries.

**Limitations/Delimitations**

The study makes the following guiding assumptions:

1. The pool of students from the fall 2010 cohort is representative of the larger population of Latino college students at the selected CSU institution.
2. Participation in this study was self-driven by the selected Latino college student.
3. A participant’s ability to use a camera and accurately record pictures taken through the use of journaling is representative of the student’s perceptions.
4. The photos taken represent the participant’s lived experience. Furthermore, it is the assumption of the researcher that students in the study truthfully answered questions and journaling of the photographs taken were an accurate portrayal of experiences with the campus climate.
5. Content analysis is a viable methodological means to analyze and code participant’s photographs.
6. Lastly, the researcher, based on life experiences and work responsibilities has the
cultural sensitivity to respect the voices of the students, given that when interviewing underrepresented people, such as Latino students, one of the most important things to keep in mind is they must feel their dignity and humanity are intact while they tell their stories and when they are represented in research (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003).
CHAPTER FOUR

PROFILES

Brief profiles of the eight participants are presented based on demographic questions student’s own observations of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis, and initial meeting questions. These profiles will provide a better understanding of the students involved in the study. Copies of each of the questions and questionnaires can be found in appendix D. After the participants signed the consent form they were asked demographic questions, initial meeting questions and the SWOT analysis in that order.

The initial meeting questions were broken up into three categories that support the overarching research and supporting questions. Those categories are as follows: sociocultural alienation, university support, and ethnic and immigrant representation. Possible multiple-choice answers were provided in a questionnaire. The SWOT analysis was based on the participating campus. The SWOT provided open-ended questions and allowed for conversations between the participant and researcher. Conversations were not audio recorded to encourage a free flow of dialogue. The researcher took hand-written notes during the initial interviews in order to create a more comfortable environment for the participant and assist in the establishment of rapport but with the participant and researcher.

For the purposes of this analysis, none of the students are identified by name in this document, and all students have been assigned a pseudonym. The researcher assigned pseudonyms based on the first letter of the student’s first name. All participants were from the fall 2010 cohort, first time-full time freshmen students in the fall of 2010, and were at
least 20 years of age at the time of study. A brief profile of the participants is provided in table 2.
**Table 2. Brief profile of participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Questions</th>
<th>Kara</th>
<th>Steven</th>
<th>Betty*</th>
<th>Eric*</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Ana</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>Stephanie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic preparedness fall 2010</strong></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living Status on campus fall 2010</strong></td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Non Resident</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Non Resident</td>
<td>Non Resident</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Non Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender identification</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did your mother/female guardian attend college?</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did your father/male guardian attend college?</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Do you identify as Latino?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Identified as an undocumented student

**Kara**

Kara’s family consisted of her mother and father and one younger brother. As the first person in her family to attend college, she spent the last year assisting her younger brother in preparing his college applications. Kara grew up in a working class household and went to public school for her K-12 education. The school she attended was predominantly Euro-American and she was bussed to the school. She is not from the area where the university is located and moved away from home in order to attend college. Kara worked two jobs in order to be able to assist her family with tuition and be able to afford to participate in a sorority. At the time of the study, she was a literature major with aspirations to teach in a university setting.
During the initial interview meeting, Kara felt that the university very much reflected her own values. She never felt socially isolated while on campus. Kara felt very integrated in to the university’s campus community. In her opinion, a minority student faced the same difficulties on campus with regards to social and cultural needs and she has never felt like she wanted to drop out of school due to sociocultural alienation.

Kara felt the university was supportive of immigrant and minority students on campus. She was able to find many options for getting involved in student organizations. She also felt that she was able to create interpersonal relationships with people that are different than she is and that the policies on campus were reflective of a supportive environment for minority and immigrant students. Kara felt that the physical campus environment represented her culturally. If given a choice, she would keep the same percentage of minority and immigrant students on campus and has been able to make friends easily.

During the SWOT analysis conversation, Kara discussed her experiences and viewpoints of the current campus climate at the participating institution.

**What are [the University’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Kara felt the amount of student organizations available for Latino students was very large. She enjoyed that there are many different types of organizations that are ethnic and major based and that “there is always a place for someone”. She felt it was positive for the campus that there were prominent Latino student leaders in student government and that this should make other Latinos on campus more comfortable. In addition, Kara felt the presence of Latinos in leadership positions should encourage other Latinos to become student leaders.
What are [the University’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?

Kara felt there was not a large population of Latino students on campus as seen around on campus and in classes. She felt that not seeing Latinos made it harder to fit in as a student. Kara was involved in a Panhellenic Greek sorority, which is a larger community of predominantly Euro-American students. She felt alienated in her sorority, as she was the only Latina in the chapter.

What are some opportunities [the University] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it) to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?

Kara thought there should be more outreach to Latino high school students to increase the amount of Latino students on campus. She also felt there should be more publications available in Spanish as well as additional tutoring (sponsored by the school) to tutor students for whom English is not their first language.

What are some threats that [the University] should be aware of or that are currently taking place that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?

Kara felt there are negative stereotypes common among students about Tijuana\(^1\) and the students who commute from Tijuana to attend school. At times, Kara prefers not to identify as Latina because of the culture and negative stereotypes associated with Tijuana. Kara felt she was always trying to fight the negative views of Latinos on campus because of her association with Tijuana.

\(^1\) Tijuana is a border city in Baja, Mexico that borders San Diego
Kara felt there was a lot of crime on campus and felt crime was a major threat to the campus climate and community. She felt very nervous when she receives crime alerts about robberies and assaults on campus. Kara felt the crime alerts were very focused on race and not on the crime or how a student could protect them selves. She stated that many students read the crime alerts and say, “oh, it’s just another Black guy committing a crime.” Kara believes the alerts should have a different focus, like more specific information on how a student can protect them selves.

Steven

Steven was the oldest child in his family and had one younger sister. He is from the San Ysidro area of the city, located near the U.S./Mexico border. Steven was introduced to the university as part of a new outreach program for students from the San Ysidro area called Casa Azteca. This program provided him with opportunities for tutoring, mentoring and small learning community interaction. He was a math major at the time of the study and had not yet decided what his career aspirations were. Steven attended a homogenous K-12 school consisting of a majority of Latinos speaking predominantly Spanish.

Steven felt the university reflected his values, however he felt socially isolated while on campus. He feels that minorities face more difficulties on campus when having their social and cultural needs met. Although he felt socially isolated at times, Steven never felt like he wanted to withdraw from the University.

Steven saw the university community members as supportive of minority and immigrant populations on campus and that the different types of student organizations available reflected that supportiveness. He also felt the physical environment was representative culturally. However, Steven did not feel that there are adequate opportunities to develop interpersonal
relationships with different types of students. Finally, Steven felt university policies were not supportive of minority students. Steven was in favor of increasing minority and immigrant populations on campus, as it had been difficult to make friends on campus that are like him.

What are [the University’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?

Steven was part of a University program called Casa Azteca\(^2\) and felt the program it assisted him and other students with the transition to and navigation of the university environment. He was also a student in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)\(^3\), which he also considered a strength of the University, as this is also a transition program for low socio-economic students. Steven felt that having these programs available to students was beneficial to underrepresented students.

What are [the University’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?

Steven felt there were not enough student organizations related to Latino culture and did not believe there were enough opportunities for Latino students to get involved on campus. As a math major he felt there were not enough Latinos taking math classes, lectures and other classes in the math building. He felt that not having enough Latinos in the math major is alienating.

\(^2\) Casa Azteca is “a program designed specifically for students living at home or off-campus [in the San Ysidro area of San Diego].” San Ysidro is a community located near the border of San Diego and Tijuana, MX. Retrieved from: http://sll.sdsu.edu/commuter/casa-azteca.html

\(^3\) The EOP program was designed nationally in the 1960’s to fight discrimination, poverty and socio-economic challenges for minority students in the higher and postsecondary environment. Retrieved from: http://eop.sdsu.edu/
What are some opportunities [the University] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it”) to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?

Steven believed there should be more outreach to local high schools in order to recruit additional Latino students and increase the population on campus. He also felt there should exist a wider variety of student organizations based on Latino culture, other than ballet folklórico. Steven believed the University should encourage Latino students to explore majors other than Spanish or Chicano studies. He believed more Latino students should be encouraged to participate in sciences, math and engineering and that the encouragement could be an opportunity for the university to increase Latino populations in those areas.

What are some threats that [the University] should be aware of or that are currently taking place that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?

Steven is from the San Ysidro area of San Diego and felt there should be more direct transportation available for students to and from campus. Although the city trolley line does go directly from San Ysidro to school, it takes roughly two to three hours to get to campus. Steven believed that not having direct transportation available for students from that geographic area is a threat to the University as the Latino students from that area may drop out of school because of the difficult commute. Additionally, he felt there were not enough opportunities for students to live on or near campus due to cost and availability. Steven felt that not being able to fulfill the demand for housing was a threat to the campus community. Finally, he felt if these two issues (more direct transportation from San Ysidro and demand for campus living) were not addressed,

there will be less Latino students involved on campus as they will simply attend class and then
go home.

**Betty**

Betty is an only child from a divorced family and lives with her father and stepmother. She considered her stepmother to be the person she was closest with and the person who really inspired her to attend college. Betty is from the San Ysidro area and attended homogenous K-12 schools where all of her peers were Latino and Spanish was the predominant language. At the time of this study Betty was a psychology major and, after finishing her bachelor’s degree, wanted to continue her education in order to have a private practice and psychology career. Betty was an undocumented student. An undocumented student is one who is not a legal resident of the United States. Generally, these are students were brought to the U.S. by parents at a young age. She was brought to the U.S. when she was one year old and has lived in the U.S. ever since. Her natural “birth” mother is in Mexico and Betty has had no contact with her.

In reflecting on the values of the University, Betty felt very closely matched her own values. However, she felt socially isolated at times and only felt somewhat integrated to the campus community. Betty felt minority students faced more difficulties in terms of meeting their social and cultural needs. She never felt like withdrawing from the university.

Betty felt the campus climate was supportive of minority and immigrant students on campus, and that there are many student organizations that reflect her cultural values. However, she did not feel enough opportunities existed to develop interpersonal relationships with those who were different than she. She felt that University policies were supportive of minorities and immigrant students, but didn’t feel the campus climate (buildings, signs, etc.) represented her culturally.
Betty felt that it is important to increase the minority and immigrant population on campus, and overall, felt that she found it easy to make friends on campus. During her initial interview she revealed, without prompting, she was an undocumented student.

**What are [the University’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Betty felt that student organizations such as Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEchA) and Education Without Borders, which cater to the needs and culture of Latino students, were a strength of the University community. She also noted that University staff is very open, friendly and helpful to all students especially Latino students and other minorities. She never felt like an outsider after interacting with staff.

**What are [the University’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Betty indicated that being a student on a large campus has been difficult. At times, Betty felt isolated and lonely. She attended a smaller community college during the summer months and felt that everyone knew each other and she did not feel as lost on campus. In her opinion, the large campus size is a weakness. Betty also made the observation that she has seen many other students also alone on campus.

**What are some opportunities [the University] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it”) to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Betty alluded to favoring increased access for immigrant students who have lived in the area since their childhood. She felt it important for the University to take advantage of the
perspective immigrant students bring to the campus environment and felt that more questions should be asked of these students about how to make the community more inclusive.

**What are some threats that [the University] should be aware of or that are currently taking place that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?**

Betty had many opinions on threats the University should be aware of, including racial tensions on campus. She felt that is a lot of discrimination occurs amongst students, especially towards Latinos. In classes, she felt Latinos were not looked at as very smart and were stereotyped a lot. Betty believed there were a lot of cliques and smaller group interactions, which is incredibly isolating. She thinks most students were in their “own world”, and were not as willing to interact with one another. Additionally, Betty felt the University does not provide enough meaningful, intentional opportunities for students to interact.

Betty also noticed many of the advertisements generated by the school and noticed that not many Latino faces were included in photos and promotional material. Specifically, she discussed the photographs in the Student Life & Leadership Office and observed that none of them included any Latino students. Betty felt the school should do a better job of being more inclusive of Latino students.

**Eric**

Eric is also an undocumented student. He is the youngest of four siblings and has one older brother and two older sisters. His older siblings did not attend college and he is the first in his family to attend college. Eric was a communication major at the time of the study and did not yet know what career path he would like to take. His K-12 experience was at a homogenous school where the majority of students were Latino and the predominant language spoken was Spanish. Eric was brought to the U.S. at age six and remembered having many problems with
adjusting to the new environment and learning English. He worked hard to sound more articulate and to speak English with less of an accent.

Eric felt the values of the University closely match his own and never felt socially isolated. He felt somewhat integrated to the campus community, however he felt minority students faced more difficulties having their social and cultural needs met. Eric has never felt like withdrawing from the university despite difficulties having cultural needs met.

Eric felt the University was supportive of minorities and immigrants and that many student organization reflect his own cultural values. Additionally, he felt the University did create adequate opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships with students who are different from each other. Eric also felt the University policies are supportive of minorities on campus. Although Eric generally felt fulfilled in the area of university supportiveness, he did not feel that the physical environment was culturally representative. Eric was in favor of increasing the percentage of minority and immigrant students on campus. He had not found it difficult to make friends on campus as he is able to find students who are “like” him. In Eric’s interview, he also revealed that he is an undocumented student and, throughout the interview, appeared to “switched hats” quite a bit when answering the questions; sometimes as a “regular” student, other times as an undocumented student. He appeared to be a little conflicted about only speaking from his true identity as an undocumented student and felt it was important to also give opinions that a “regular” student might feel. For the purposes of this summary, only his opinions stemming from being an undocumented student were reflected.

What are [the University’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?
Eric felt the strengths of the University were in the resources offered to all students, including counseling, EOP, student life and student government. He also felt the campus was very diverse and located in a big city, therefore allowing students to live at home. Latino students, in his opinion, tend to live at home more often so this campus is a good fit for them.

**What are [the University’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

From an undocumented perspective, Eric felt that one of the biggest weaknesses of the University was that most of the undocumented student population was not aware of all the resources available to them. He also felt that a majority of staff members at the University did not know how to help undocumented students. Lastly, Eric believed that the curriculum and programs offered do not reflect the needs of all students, only Euro-American students.

**What are some opportunities [the University] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it)” to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Eric believed the University should do more outreach to high schools in order to recruit more Latino students.

**What are some threats that [the University] should be aware of or that are currently taking place that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?**

Eric believed the school should be aware of the lack of education about undocumented (AB 540⁵) students for staff members. He did not feel the needs of this population were being met.

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⁵ California state law that allows for students who have resided in the state and fulfilled other requirements to receive in-state tuition. Retrieved from: http://ab540.com
Chris is from a low-income area in Los Angeles. In his K-12 schooling, he attended a heterogeneous school with predominantly Latino, Black and South Asian populations. Chris stated that, most of the races were not socially integrated, there within his group of friends, Spanish was the predominant language. He was the middle child in his family and had one older brother and one younger sister. Chris had been speaking with his younger sister about attending college and planned on helping her with college applications. Chris changed majors quite frequently, but felt at the time of the study that his current major, business administration, was a good fit.

Chris believed the University’s values reflect few of his own values, and at times felt socially isolated while on campus. He felt somewhat integrated into the University community believed that minority students had more difficulties than other students, and expressed that Latino social and cultural need to be met. However, Chris had never felt that he wanted to withdraw from school. He did feel the school was supportive of minority and immigrant students, that student organization options reflected his cultural values, and that there adequate opportunities existed to develop interpersonal relationships with students who were different than he. Chris believed there were policies supportive of minority students and the physical environment represents him culturally. Chris favored increasing the percentage of minority and immigrant students and has found it easy to make friends on campus.

What are [the University’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?
Chris felt the school’s location in a diverse city and near the U.S./Mexico border was a strength to the campus. He felt the University is forced to cater to Latinos and therefore increase the
population on campus and in the diversity of available student organizations. Chris believed the faculty and staff was open-minded and understood the student population they served. However, he did not believe the University is offered enough resources (other than EOP) specifically for Latino students. He believed students who live on campus have the best opportunity to make a good transition to college life.

**What are [the University’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Although Chris knows there are Latinos on campus, he does not actually “see” them on campus and feels incredibly isolated. Chris believed the school should have more resources for minority students other than EOP. If additional resources do exist, the school was not doing adequate advertising of those available resources.

**What are some opportunities [the University] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it” to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

In particular, Chris believed the university should do a better job of “bringing more life” to campus; “bringing more life” included more cultural celebrations and displays of the lives of students. Specifically, he commented on a different university in the city with a dedicated space for displaying student art and graffiti. He believed having more open and dedicated space on campus for students to be expressive will be an opportunity for administrators to make a more positive campus environment for all students, not just Latinos.

**What are some threats that [the University] should be aware of or that are currently taking place that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?**
Chris stated of the biggest threats to the university is the financial instability of the California State University system, which oversees this participating university including all tuition and fee increases. Chris believed increases in fees and tuition will make it more difficult for Latino students to enroll in and complete school. He believed that “access is closing” to minority students. Chris also believed a threat lay within student government (AS) and that student leadership did not fully represent the diversity on campus. Voices are “being muted” and not everyone was able to give input on how the student body is represented.

Ana

Ana is the oldest child in her family and has one younger sister. She is from San Ysidro and was part of the Casa Azteca outreach program. Ana felt the program assisted in her transition to the university. At the time of the study, she was a child and family development major and hoped to assist families in the San Ysidro area by providing counseling. Her K-12 experience consisted of homogenous schools that were predominantly Latino and Spanish was the primary language amongst her peers.

This participant believed the values of the University closely reflected her own values. She felt very integrated into the community, but sometimes felt socially isolated. Ana thought minority students have the same difficulties as other students in terms of having their social and cultural needs met on campus. Even though she felt integrated into the campus community, she has felt like she wanted to withdraw from school.

Ana felt the University was not supportive of minority or immigrant students in terms of policies and the physical environment. She believed there are enough student organization options available that reflect her cultural values and adequate opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships with students who are different from her exist. She was in favor of
increasing the percentage of minority and immigrant students on campus and has found it easy to make friends.

**What are [the University’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Ana was involved with the Casa Azteca program on campus and felt the program was a strength of campus as it offered opportunities for on campus help such as tutors, mentors, and professional staff dedicated to a small group of students. She also likes that staff and students on campus were friendly and helpful. Ana also believed a strength was that sports teams on campus were doing well added notoriety to the campus.

**What are [the University’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Ana stated that weakness of the university was the lack of available financial aid, especially since the cost of tuition is continuing to increase. There were not a variety of ethnic food options, except for expensive mainstream fast food. Lastly, Ana saw fewer Latinos in classes and there were too many online classes. She believed that online classes hinder the amount of student interaction.

**What are some opportunities [the University] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it)” to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Ana expressed the need for more financial aid support and to increase the campus awareness of student diversity. She would like to see the University do more culturally based programs and feels there were not enough of the programs being offered.
What are some threats that [the University] should be aware of or that are currently taking place that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?

Ana believed a big threat to campus was the amount of crime that occurred in and around campus. She also stated that the lack of scholarship opportunities and increase in tuition and fees were challenging for students, especially, Latino students. Ana lived on campus during her freshman year and felt the policies were not student friendly and that students were not treated well upon move out, because the housing office is looking for ways to charge students. She felt this treatment could be a threat to campus because students will not want to live on campus.

Luke

Luke is from northern California and is the oldest child in his family. He has two younger brothers. He was considered a co-parent to his younger siblings and was challenged by his parents about why he moved away for college. Luke’s K-12 school experience was at a homogenous school where the predominant ethnicity was Black. He said the Latinos in the community formed a tight bond with one another because of the racial tension that existed. Luke’s family is originally from El Salvador and his parents are considered political refugees who fled from the unrest in that country.

Luke felt very integrated to the campus community, but sometimes felt socially isolated. He did feel the University’s values closely reflect his own. Luke also expressed that he believed minority students faced the same difficulties having their social and cultural needs met on campus. He has never felt like withdrawing from the university.

Luke believed the University was not supportive of minority and immigrant students on campus, specifically as related to in its policies and the physical environment. He did not see any signs, photos, statues, etc., on campus that represented him culturally. However, he did feel
there were student organization options available on campus that reflected his cultural values and there were adequate opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships with students who were different from him. Luke was in favor of increasing the percentage of minority and immigrant students on campus and found it easy to make friends on campus.

**What are [the University’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Luke felt the strengths of the campus included pride in leadership opportunities and the amount of student organizations available to students on campus. Luke had been involved with a Latino-based fraternity and that experience helped make for a more positive experience on campus for him. He felt there were a lot of opportunities to get involved if students took advantage of these opportunities.

**What are [the University’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Luke believed there were not enough Latinos used in advertisements or photos about the school, especially considering the university is a Hispanic-serving institution. He felt alienated in the classroom because he did not see many students “like him”. He felt that he was not as smart as other students in all Euro-American classes. Luke did not feel that he was a priority as a Latino student and did not hear much about the resources offered at a Hispanic-serving institution.

**What are some opportunities [the University] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it” to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Luke believed opportunity lay within the Chicano studies department and that the department could utilize students to begin serving the Hispanic community in San Diego or in Tijuana,
Mexico. He also saw opportunity in the Compact for Success\(^6\) program on campus as it can further diversify the student body.

**What are some threats that [the University] should be aware of or that are currently taking place that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?**

Luke believed there were not positive stereotypes of Latinos on campus with administrators, police officers and Anglo-American students. Many times Latinos were viewed as gangsters depending on how they are dressed. Luke had been mistaken for a gangster when he wore jeans and looked casual. However, he did not feel that Anglo-American students were treated the same way or that negative assumptions were made about them when they dressed in a similar fashion. Luke thought crime bulletins from police focused too much on race and not on how students can protect themselves on campus. The Cross Cultural Center was of value on campus, however there were not enough programs or specific support to students from that office. Luke also mentioned that the University did not create any publications in Spanish for parents or students whose first language is Spanish and may feel more comfortable reading important documents in their primary language.

**Stephanie**

Stephanie was a nursing major and is an only child from Los Angeles. She is from a middle class family and her K-12 school experience was at a predominantly Euro-American school. She had always felt a little out of place in her home community and came to this university to seek out opportunities for diversity. While from a middle class family, she had to work two jobs to help pay for tuition and books.

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\(^6\) A program that partners with a local 9-12 lower socio-economic school district to create opportunities for students to attend a local university (with guaranteed admission) upon graduation from high school after meeting 5 designated benchmarks. Retrieved from: http://compactforsuccess.sdsu.edu/compact/about.aspx
Stephanie felt the University reflected her own personal values and she felt very integrated and not socially isolated within the campus community. However, she did feel that minority students faced more difficulties getting their social and cultural needs met. She never felt she should withdraw from the university.

Generally, she felt the University was supportive of minority and immigrant students and that she was able to find student organizations that reflected her cultural values. She also felt she has been exposed to adequate opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships with students different from her. However, she did not feel the policies of the University were supportive of minority and immigrant students and that the physical environment did not reflective cultural diversity. Stephanie was in favor of increasing the amount of minority students on campus and has found it difficult to make friends at the university.

**What are [the University’s] strengths with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**

Stephanie felt that programs such as Compact for Success that are aimed at recruiting Latino students helps make campus a more positive atmosphere. Stephanie also saw a few Latino faculty in her classes and felt this is positive and helps her to feel comfortable in a handful of classes. She also felt the amount of student organizations that cater to Latino interests was positive and she had been able to join organizations and create a network of like-minded students.

**What are [the University’s] weaknesses with regards to making it a positive campus environment for Latino students?**
One weakness of the university was that it took Stephanie a while (into her second year as a student) to find organizations for Latinos and ways to get involved on campus. The University, in her opinion, did not do a good job advertising ways for Latino students to get involved. She talked about how she did not see Latino students when she got to campus and wondered, “How do I get to know more Latinos on campus? Where is everyone?” Another weakness of the university was that all Latinos are lumped together and called “Hispanic,” with no distinction between the different types of Latinos. There were many different types of Latino students on campus, yet everyone was considered Mexican because of the close proximity to the U.S./Mexico border. Stephanie had many friends from other countries, but the University did not respect these differences; the University was just looking for ways to make it easier on themselves by clumping everyone together. The University further offended students by referring to the group as “Hispanic,” which is considered offensive by most Latinos. Stephanie also felt very intimidated on campus and believed that not having a Latino-focused orientation was a weakness to the university, especially since she was the only one from her high school to attend this school and she only saw Euro-American students at orientation. Stephanie also talked about the physical environment: (monuments, statues, murals) and that they were more Euro-centric. Stephanie did not feel welcomed to campus by the physical environment. She felt that by being so close to the U.S./Mexico border, more murals or other artifacts that are representative of Latino “cultura” (culture) should be present.
What are some opportunities [the University] can take advantage of (either internally in the campus community or outside of it” to make it a positive campus environment for Latino students?

Opportunities that the University should take advantage of included recognizing more Latino and other cultural traditions on campus. Stephanie indicated that the Cross Cultural Center hosted culturally-based programming, but that the University did not appear to support cultural programs on a large scale. She said the following, “Hey, this is not just White people!” She would like the school to take better advantage of the diversity of campus and mobilize everyone to support a cause or program. Stephanie also remembered a BBQ that occurred during the school’s welcome week on the second or third day of school and she wondered why hot dogs and hamburgers were always served. She indicated that something as simple as the food that is served can pay homage to the different cultures on campus and stated, “maybe doing something a little more spicy and ethnic would make it more fun!”

Stephanie also felt that students should be more educated on Aztec culture, since the Aztecs are the mascot of the school. She felt that people only thought of the mascot (a person blowing a conch shell and dressed in native attire) and not what the mascot represented to people of Latino descent. She believed that students should really know what an Aztec is, including their contributions to agriculture and architecture. The Aztec culture really resonates with many of Stephanie’s friends and she felt the culture was not given the full respect it deserves.
What are some threats that [the University] should be aware of or that are currently taking place that do not make the campus environment a positive one for Latino students?

Stephanie felt that a threat to the University was higher-level administration and city officials. She felt “those people” were afraid that the school is going to become largely populated by underrepresented students and she believed they are afraid to see the university not be “as White” or Euro-centric. She believed there were a lot of politics in the background of decision making and that higher level administrators were afraid to jeopardize the school’s name and reputation for being predominately Euro-centric. Stephanie felt that the fight for power was going to be the biggest threat to the University.

Stephanie saw large class sizes as a threat because most students are not familiar with the format in the large lecture style classes, a format that can be intimidating and not productive to student success. She felt the classes could create a sense of being lost. During orientation, Stephanie heard a lot about making friends and creating study groups. However, she soon realized that in these large classes, she perceived the student sitting next to her already had their own friends and do not necessarily want to be her friend or help her in anyway. This belief added to the intimidating atmosphere.

Stephanie also felt the lack of diverse faculty was a threat to the University. While she had a few faculty members that were not from a Euro-American background, the majority of the faculty was Euro-American and she generally felt intimidated in classes taught by those faculty because she felt they look at her as being less intelligent than her classmates. Stephanie mentioned that her darker complexion made her more of a target for Euro-American faculty and the faculty pool should be more reflective of the increasing diversity on campus.
Reflections of Student Profile

Table 3 provides a summary of how eight first generation Latinos saw the campus with respects to seven dimensions mentioned in their interviews. A summary suggests the following: 75% of the participants felt the university was a supportive environment for Latino students. Three of the 8 students felt the physical environment was reflective; one student who felt the environment was reflective only in regards to the student organizations that are offered. Ninety percent of the students felt the population of Latinos on campus needs to be increased. Of the eight students, 75% felt some level of isolation on campus, and 100% felt the university met some of their social and cultural needs. Participants offered several ideas as to how to create a positive environment including more outreach to Latino high school students, greater awareness of diverse populations, and supporting Latino-based student groups. One student also believed more Latino students should be encouraged to consider STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) majors in order to create more inclusivity within the majors.

With regards to campus tensions, participants perceived many negative stereotypes about Latinos on campus. This was displayed through campus crime alerts and negative connotations with Tijuana, Mexico. Specifically, several participants felt the crime alerts focused too much on race of the perpetrator, not Euro-American, but rarely stated the ethnicity of someone who is Euro-American. Also, the lack of images of Latino students in advertisements from the bookstore or the food market was a campus tension for participants. The lack of financial stability for the California State University as tuition increased and accessibility to higher education dwindles was also considered a tension. One of the participants felt there were fewer scholarships and financial aid available to offset the tension. Outreach to Latino parents and families when a student was admitted into the university was lacking. Finally, participants felt
there was a lack of inclusion of Latinos in student government and of AB 540 students in overall student life on campus. Table 3 summarizes the seven themes captured in the study, themes that will be further discussed in Chapter 5 to demonstrate the participants’ overall campus climate impressions throughout the SWOT.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Kara</th>
<th>Steven</th>
<th>Betty</th>
<th>Eric</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Ana</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>Stephanie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>University Support</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
<td>Unsupportive</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Culturally Reflective Physical Environment</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Not Reflective</td>
<td>Not Reflective</td>
<td>Student organizations reflective culturally</td>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Not Reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Size of Latinos on Campus</td>
<td>Maintain Level</td>
<td>Increase Level</td>
<td>Increase Level</td>
<td>Increase Level</td>
<td>Increase Level</td>
<td>Increase Level</td>
<td>Increase Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Integration to Campus Environment</td>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Somewhat Isolated</td>
<td>Somewhat Isolated</td>
<td>Accepting</td>
<td>Somewhat Isolated</td>
<td>Somewhat Isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social &amp; Cultural Needs</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive w/ staff and department support</td>
<td>Somewhat positive</td>
<td>Positive w/staff and department support</td>
<td>Positive faculty &amp; school location near int’l border</td>
<td>Casa Azteca mentoring &amp; campus staff</td>
<td>Pride in leadership opportunities and student organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Opportunities for Creating a Positive Environment for Latinos</td>
<td>More outreach &amp; tutoring</td>
<td>More students in STEM majors</td>
<td>Supporting MeChA and other student groups</td>
<td>Outreach to high schools to recruit Latinos</td>
<td>Bringing more life to campus and displaying student life</td>
<td>Campus needs greater awareness of diverse students</td>
<td>Utilizing Chicana/o Studies Department and outreach programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Campus Tensions</td>
<td>Negative stereotypes and campus crime alerts</td>
<td>Not enough opportunities to live on or near campus</td>
<td>Racism, stereotypes, no images of Latinos</td>
<td>Lack of inclusion for AB 540 students</td>
<td>Financial instability of CSU; access is closing, student government not representative of students</td>
<td>Crime in &amp; around campus and lack of scholarships to offset rising cost of attending college</td>
<td>No positive perceptions of Latinos, crime bullying focusing on race, lack of parent Latino outreach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Profile table with themes
CHAPTER FIVE

PHOTOVOICE

This chapter of the study examines the seven themes derived from the photos and journals with the eight selected Latino first generation college students at a large California State university that has the recognition of being a Hispanic Serving Institution. Specifically, this chapter documents how Latino students view the psychosocial and physical environment of the university. The seven themes derived from the initial interviews in chapter four are now explored using photovoice.

As described in chapter three of the study, photovoice is a form of participatory action research with theoretical underpinnings in critical consciousness, feminist theory and nontraditional approaches to documentary photography (Wang, 1999). Photovoice allows for a participant in a study to show how they view the world around them without the use of language or writing. Photovoice allows the opportunity for critical dialogue between the researcher and participant during which a participant can share their perceptions using photos taken in a selected setting or environment. Wang (2009) illustrates the three main goals of photovoice,

“…to enable people (1) to record and reflect their personal and community strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through group discussions of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers (pg. 185).”

This study used the environment of a university campus to apply the photovoice technique. The outcomes of photovoice are presented in this chapter using the following seven themes: integration to campus environment, university support, culturally reflective physical
environment, social and cultural needs, opportunities for creating a positive environment for Latinos, and campus tensions. Each of the themes is described from the perceptions of the eight selected Latino students.

**Integration to Campus Environment**

For many Latino students, isolation is normal on a college campus. As noted by Hurtado & Carter (1997), Latino students navigate between two different worlds, the university and social/cultural, which can cause a sense of isolation and they are trying to negotiate two different identities. Isolation is further complicated when students do not have a sense there exists a critical mass of Latinos on campus and they feel completely alone and confused about how to navigate the campus environment. Keller & Tillman (2008), feel that it is important for university administrators to be more aware of how underrepresented students perceive the campus climate as these perceptions can be an indicator of feelings of isolation and lack of campus integration. The success of a student at a university is largely dependent on whether or not the student feels integrated into the university campus climate, whether the student experiences feelings of isolation. From the themes derived from the initial student interviews, participants offered insight into their perceptions of isolation on campus.

**Ana**

Ana, who lived on campus her first year, shared a photo (figure 4) of friends studying in order to reflect on her first year living in the residence halls and, when asked, about selected photo shared:
For example, when I came to the school I didn’t ... well, I did know that you were supposed to meet people and then try to study together, but I felt that since I lived on campus I did meet people but not my type of people. I feel that I was in my own little shell and I feel that maybe if I wouldn’t have lived on campus, like right now, I would get to explore around school instead of being like, “Oh, I have to go back to my dorm and do my homework or something.” I feel like I can just be here and just meet people or go to places instead of just being in my own little room in my dorm. I [came] from I guess not a diverse community. Most of the people are Latino so I wasn’t used to having people from different cultures around me. Well, I was friendly with them. I got along with them but I just felt out of place.

Ana’s experience living on campus was not entirely positive. During her interview, she continued to discuss how she did not get along with her roommate, was asked to move to different locations while in the residence hall system, and she did not feel as free to meet different people or explore the campus. She felt very tied to the residence hall room, and when she did not have class, felt the need to go straight back to the residence hall room.
When Luke, another student who lived on campus his first year, was asked the question: Have you ever felt socially isolated while living on campus? He shared the following:

I didn’t get along with my roommate when I was in the dorms. He was my complete opposite. Like a rich, dorky, white boy and it was hard for me to connect with him. We just have our mutual understanding. All I did in my room was sleep. I would always hang out at my fraternity house or I would hang out with people … my neighbor's room and hang out and stuff like that. Being able to work with different types of people in your own personal space is challenging. That means that I lived in a predominantly low-income Hispanic community. Most of my friends and class members were Latino so I wasn’t exposed to many people from different cultures. However, I know that in other communities one can find great ethnic diversity. At the university I found that the majority of the students were from other ethnic groups, with whites students more visible than any other group. I definitely felt a lack of belonging.

To illustrate his sense of campus isolation, Luke shared a picture (figure 5) of his support network of underrepresented students that helped him overcome a sense of isolation. Luke strongly expressed that he was able to find his own community on campus outside of the residence halls.
Studying with a friend makes studying go a lot faster and makes learning information easier. TEAM, everyone … together everyone achieves more. True friends join me in the late-night studying groups during finals. Then I said, when I see this picture, in my eyes, I will reminisce on the beauty of friendship. We're all minorities in this picture and are all united to our common goal to graduate college.

Luke related that what he felt was experienced by many minority students on campus as they have to find their communities of friends to hang out and study with. Luke was able to find a small community of ethnically diverse students he was able to relate to and feel a sense of being safe and comfortable with.
Steven, a non-resident student, expressed how he felt students tend to group themselves on campus. He shared a photo (figure 6) and discussed his experience in the 24-hour area located in the library.

Figure 6

I did all my studying there. It's just normal when there's no mid-terms or finals going on, I [noticed] everyone has certain groups; like there are tables where there are all Asian people with their computers and a bunch of engineers [all studying together]. It's not just [broken up by] race but also race and major.

In Steven’s experience, in order to prevent isolation, he found comfort in the campus library where he could focus on his academic achievement and see student groups come together by race and major. Steven’s experience, to some degree, is similar to what Luke described, in that underrepresented students tend to gravitate towards one another, because they believe they are having a similar experience in the university campus. Subconsciously, students seem to be creating their own network of social and academic support.
A non-resident student, Betty, expressed awareness of the psychosocial sense of isolation she perceived on campus. Betty was able to clearly articulate the challenges she saw on campus. Betty shared this photo (figures 7) and observation:

![Figure 7]

When I saw this picture, I thought, that is not representative of me. “Why are there no ethnic faces or persons in the images around campus. So what? We’re [Latinos] not healthy? We’re not attractive enough?” Because I know about all my friends, they work out and they really physically attractive and have good bodies and they eat really healthy and whatever, but you never see that in advertisements or anything on campus.
Betty therefore had poignant observations of what she feels are the psychosocial isolation tensions that she feels on campus as a Latina, first generation college student. As shown in the photo, Betty noticed in advertisements on campus, and described what she believed is a misrepresentation that Latino people are not as healthy as Euro-American counterparts.

A resident student, Chris, also felt isolation when navigating campus culture. In Chris’ photo (figure 8) and journal he discussed the culture of campus and how the culture impacted his comfort level and social integration:

A victim of [this school’s] superficial lifestyle and culture. Greek life is a huge influential body that dictates Associated Students and sets trends for others to follow. In this image you see the ARC (campus recreational center) sign above the center. This is the epicenter for frat douchebags to pump iron indirectly stating their dominance. Social fraternities and sororities place a huge value in physical appearances feeding into the “party school” notion. I have found myself working out simply for the sake of what others might think of me. It’s a harsh realization, but it needs to be changed. Working out simply for the sake of what others might think of me think of this harsh realization, but need to be myself and be proud of my background and pursue what is good for me, not what others think of me.
Eric and Stephanie, both non-resident students, expressed a sense of isolation when trying to fit in a campus that, while ethnically diverse, seems to have a dominant message geared towards whiteness. This can make Latino students feel not socially integrated in the large majority of campus spaces. Eric, however, sees it as mostly the fault of Latinos. The following photos (Figure 9 and 10 respectively) depict their sense of integration into the campus environment.
I would say you would see less integration in the Latino community, because like I said it seems to me that a lot of us campus don’t take advantage of a lot of opportunities that we have so we might not get involved in anything. We are usually in the corner just watching and not getting anything out of anything. This doesn’t apply to everyone but I would say you see that happening because they don’t get involved, so we tend to be a little shy or a little bit more intimidated to do something or something like that.
I think for me, personally, when I first got onto campus I wasn’t very aware of the different ways to get involved. Obviously now that I’ve gotten involved I know about the Latino-based organizations on campus, but I feel like when I was a first year student when I got those welcome week brochures, they didn’t tell me how to get to meetings or where to go. They only tabled for one week and then they’d all disappear, and I wondered, “How do I get to meetings? How do I get to know more Latinos on campus?” That was one of the challenges that I faced as a new student here. I didn’t know where to go to find like people that I can relate to, people that were of my own ethnicity.

Kara, a residential student, expressed that she felt fully integrated to the campus environment and does not feel a sense of isolation. Here is her photo and reflection in figure 11:
I love it going to basketball games and being involved, it's just amazing. I feel like our school isn't necessarily known for its school pride, but it's cool to see everyone wearing black and red before basketball and football games. It's something that has improved in the last couple of years. It's definitely not Michigan or anything. Their town only exists because of the school. Here, there are a lot of competing interests, so it's nice to see everyone so prideful about their school, and I love it. I want to go and be part of the “Show” (the student section at basketball games) and paint my face. It inspires passion in me to be a part of that, but just seeing everyone, the thousands of students ... I feel so lucky to have experienced such a great college social life. I just don’t understand why not everyone gets involved.

University Support

The success of a student at a university is largely dependent on whether or not that student feels supported by the university. Many schools only offer structural diversity as a means to support underrepresented students. Universities need to offer more than just population numbers on the campus. Student need to feel supported and acknowledged through structured programming and opportunities for students to intentionally social interact with like-minded students. It is important for college personnel to understand the needs of
underrepresented students and to create ways to construct an inclusive campus environment (Chang, et.al., 2006; Gurin, et.al., 2002; Milem, et.al., 2005; Nuñez, 2009). Chris’ photo (figure 12) and reflection is important to show for the need for university support.

Figure 12

It kind of reminds me of … it's kind of weird, but of the jail back at home in LA, the Los Angeles County Jail, how they have the slit windows where you can barely see anything. That just gives me a feel of where I come from, of where I grew up in LA. A library that looks like a prison…it’s very interesting how a building can look like both. I remember that I'm a young brown man and there are many more of us in jail than here.

They are aware of their racial identity, gender, and the difficulties of other Latinos. For Chris, he thinks about how his life could have been very different had he not continued his education. A structure as ordinary as a library can be a subtle reminder to continue to work hard and not make similar mistakes that so many men from his neighborhood have made.
This is an example of a background experience that Latino students may bring with them to campus. Universities need to be aware of these associations in order to provide the proper sociocultural support.

Figure 13 is an example of Steven’s experience commuting to school:

Figure 13

I think it tends to take forever just to get here and to go home. You don't really want to stay here after your classes, so you don't want to really be a part of the school, like join any clubs or … you won't be able to just hang out to watch games or anything like that at the Aztec Center or you just want to go to class and go home. If you're not involved in school, you're not going to feel that warm welcome, like, "Yeah, I belong here," and stay. Yeah, I think that's the major gap between Latinos here at state because most of them take the trolley, because if they would just commute by car, then maybe they'll stay longer since it won't be that much of a long drive. I don’t understand why the school doesn’t do anything about all of the students that have to commute from San Ysidro. It would be cool to see the school have a bus that offers a direct and quicker way to get to campus. The trolley takes forever…there have been times it’s taken me 3 hours to get to class. It sucks.

Steven, a non-residential student, is referring to the experiences of many students who commute to campus on the city trolley. Many of the Latino students are commuting from
the border area between California and Mexico. During conversations with all participants from that area, it was apparent that a common goal was to get a car or find some way to carpool with someone so they do not have to take the trolley. Four of the 8 students in this study are commuting from the border area of the city, which can take two to four hours via trolley depending on traffic conditions. This is one example of how the University has no considered offering more support (such as transportation) for students from this area of the city.

In the case of Kara, a residential student, she was able to find a community of support in an academic space on campus as depicted in figure 14:
Well, that's the Student Life & Leadership Office and office support. I think the reason why I chose that photo, or chose to take a picture is because it is my on-campus home. It's really nice that this has been able to give me a place to come and feel like I'm not just kind of floating through campus, lost. Without that, like I said, I would just be more of a mess. It's nice to have this here as a physical space, and even relationship-wise, it's all the relationships I've made here. I've been working longest with Patricia, my supervisor; and so when I need advice, I come here. It's nice to have those mentors, and I would say Patricia and Denise are probably most like my mentors, the people in my life that I look up to the most. I have a lot of people, like my parents and everything like that, but it's just like not having those people here.
Kara was able to feel a sense of support from a campus office, which is a part of the university. She feels like this office is her “home base” and a place she can connect with others and find mentors. Ana, Eric and Stephanie see a lack of university support in terms of large class sizes, academic mentoring and lack of financial assistance to attend school. Figures 15, 16 & 17, respectively, depict their thoughts:
I took a picture of the outside of a classroom. This classroom is a really large lecture room. Most of us are not used to taking classes in this way. I don’t think it’s cool that the school can’t get a budget together to make sure there are not so many students packed into a class. I don’t feel like I’ve gotten enough support to do well academically.
As a student, I cannot help but frown upon the large number of students forced to accept these unfavorable conditions. This image can represent the general trend of higher university costs and larger class sizes. One would assume that the more you pay for a service the better the quality, but in this instance understanding or connection is absent. This is largely due to the state allocating less money to public universities, meaning that those students you see crammed in the classroom have to pay more of the bill. I might not see some of them along my college career because of potential financial barriers I might face. Very frightening.
I think of large classes in general, when the majority of Latinos aren’t expected to attend college, and when we do, we come to this really intimidating situation. Most of my freshman year classes were large classes, they were rarely small classes; so coming into something you or your family are not familiar with is really hard. Going from thirty students in a high school class to five hundred students in a classroom, that’s very intimidating. Most of the Latinos here that are from the area that commute; they’re more likely to just stay back home and feel more comfortable going to a community college or just staying, preventing themselves from trying to succeed in a university and wanting to go back to a community college where they feel a little more comfortable. It’s very intimidating to come into a five hundred-student class where you expect your neighbor to be your friend, but your neighbor’s got all these other friends that he already knows from all the frats and all the sororities. You’re just lost, and I think that’s a big threat.

Betty also shared observations about university support and how support is depicted through sociopolitical structures of the school (figure 18):
I was in the East Commons, I was studying a little bit before my class, and I just happened to see the board of directors of the Aztec Shops. It was interesting in how most of them, maybe more than half were Caucasian and maybe there’s one Asian and maybe two African-Americans. But there’s no Latino there. I was wondering, what is that due to? Why? Are we not working hard enough? Are we not … I find that interesting in a lot of the pictures, so I kind of took these two photos to kind of represent all of the pictures that I see around campus.

Betty also asserted that there is no Latino representation in the majority of campus committees that are important to the campus and that this is due to through as lack of university support.

Luke also looked at university support in terms of psychosocial tensions with regards to his education (figure 19):
In my eyes you see the basics to political science, ancient political thought, Plato, Thucydides, Aristotle. But whatever happened to the Indios political thought? Is it that the white man is the only one for reason in government? I was reflecting why that is?? How come it's only the white man’s philosophy that's being taught at school for political science. The only Chicano study classes they offer in political science is border relations. So I was like "Oh, that's maybe something they need to be more inclusive and supportive about … because I mean there is more politics that stem from Latin America.

Luke expressed that, in his opinion, many students do not put much critical thought into what is being taught in the classroom and psychosocial tensions. Luke was concerned about inclusiveness in the curriculum and how inclusivity effects his education, social perspectives, and the quality of university support.
Culturally Reflective Physical Environment

Knez (2005) asserts that place attachment, place identity and sense of place are the three constructs that revolve around person-place identity (Knez, 2005, pg. 208). Place attachment provides “social identification” for a person and can manifest itself in a positive or negative experience. Not only does this include the physical space, but the relationships within it (Knez, 2005). In the following set of photographs the students reflected on their experiences with the physical environment.

In figure 20, Stephanie reflections on the school mascot and how the mascot is reflected in the physical environment as related to her cultural background.
I think it would be great for students if we were educated on what an Aztec really is, because that in itself, we call ourselves Aztecs but we don’t really even know where that comes from. It’s a statue on campus, it’s guy running around blowing a Conch shell at a football game, but is behind it. I love him [the student mascot], he’s cool … but we don’t actually know the history behind it. It’s not just for the Latino community, it’s for all students to be aware of what being an Aztec really is and it should be reflected with more pride around campus. I, myself, am not fully educated on the history and the background and a better understanding on how it fits in my cultural background. Even something as small as having more physical statues of the Aztec on campus—maybe fountains or places to sit, I know most students would love to sit out there and study and have some history, a little fountain with some history on it. Even something as small as that can be very educational and educate the whole population, not just the Latino community here at SDSU.
Chris and Ana thought about the physical environment in a different way. They were not necessarily thinking about what can be added to reflect their culture, but instead looked at the current structures on campus and how these structures impact their experience at school in (figures 21 & 22, respectively):

Figure 21

A staircase and a few students heading up the stairs, perhaps ready to go to class. Beyond that, this image symbolizes the process of upward mobility in life. The reason why I say this is because I strongly feel that earning my degree will enable me to pursue opportunities of growth and success. I am on my way up that staircase.
Basically for me this photo brings me back to memories from the first semester because I used to go there a lot. [I went] by myself or with a friend so I would go there and get a latte, a double chocolate chip latte and I assimilate the sweetness of the drink to the freedom I had because it was my first time living on campus so I felt like freedom.

Yet, Eric would like to see more reflections of Latinos in his learning environment. He recently found out about the stock market lab on campus as depicted in figure 23:
I just thought the stock market lab was really cool. I didn’t know about it until this semester. I might have walked passed it a few times this past year but I just never noticed it. I think it would be cool to see some business tickers and business newspapers from Mexico or other Latin countries. Since we are so close to the border and we will be doing business with them, it’s important. I also think [this lab] it’s a reminder that we have the resources available to us depending on our majors and regardless of our background. The resources are here but need to be publicized. We just need to take advantage of them. We, as Latinos sometimes take them for granted; we don’t take advantage of them.

In the case of Luke, he expressed the need to create a culturally reflective physical environment for himself. As a student who lived on campus his first year, he did not experience a culturally reflective environment. However, once he joined a Latino-founded fraternity and became involved with campus activities, he was able to create a positive environment for himself. Figure 24 includes his photo and reflection:
In my eyes you see pride. Everything in life is earned. Being able to go to a four-year university is a privilege. I balance school, work, family, social life and a leader in my student organization. I joined my organization, because I needed a safe space that fellow Latinos created. In our house we hang pictures of Che, the Mexican flag and the Salvadorian flag. We can show Latino pride in our home. It’s pretty cool, because you wouldn’t see things like that up around campus.

Luke and his friends were able to create a social space in which they feel comfortable in and hang different artifacts that invoke a sense of pride in their cultural background.

Betty found a small bulletin board in the art building on campus that reflected Latino accomplishments as shown in figure 25.
Figure 25

I think that’s very nice that we have bulletin boards here and it’s kind of inclusive, because anyone can post something…not just the school, but students, too. It doesn’t just have a certain ethnicity; it has everybody. You can read about everybody’s accomplishments or what they’re up to. I like this picture here. It has some Latino students highlighted and they’re doing this project. I went through a lot of buildings to find something like this, and I thought it was pretty cool to see it.

Betty visited a number of buildings in an attempt to find something reflecting her cultural voice and the accomplishments of the diverse student body. Many buildings did not have a bulletin board, poster, etc. that reflected her culture. However, she was able to feel a sense of pride from the bulletin board she did find.

Kara had a different perspective of the campus physical environment. She found her comfort “home” in the library as shown in figure 26:
I don’t have a place that is “home” in San Diego, but the most stable place in my life had been the Library. However pathetic it may be, I feel like when I’m old and thinking about my college days the main picture in my head will be this library. Places which I know better than any other place in the city, a place that had helped me define who I am today. It’s a neutral place, one where anyone can go and feel welcome.

Kara’s photo and reflection show that she found comfort in areas of campus that she perceived as “neutral” and not necessarily reflective of any one cultural group. Of the participants in the study, Kara provided indicators that suggest that she was the most assimilated into the university. She felt more comfortable in areas that are not “too Latino.”

Steven felt the most iconic spot on campus was the campus bell tower as it is the symbol most often used in promotional brochures. He believed the towers were the most culturally reflective area of campus, noted in figure 27:
I took that photo because it's the most famous building that is here on campus, the oldest one, and one everyone can relate to. It’s reflective of Latino culture, because it is like a mission style building. It’s cool because everyone has had classes in there and you see a mix of everyone from different races coming in and out of that place.

Size of Latinos on Campus

Participants in this study overwhelmingly indicated the need to increase the population of Latinos on campus. While the university has a large number of ethnically diverse student, there is a climate of being more Euro-American thus there is a perceived need for increased structural diversity. Although the institution is categorized as a “Hispanic Serving Institution,” many students do not feel there is a critical mass of Latino students on campus. In the figures 28, 29, 30 & 31 Stephanie, Luke, Ana and Chris respectively reflect on the lack of Latino students on campus:
I think the programs that they have with the Latino community like Compact for Success, also Casa Azteca gives us hope that more Latino students will be let into the university and it won’t be so lonely around here.
I took a picture of a student studying and I was with others. I can stay awake, or at least try to. I work with my mind so that I no longer have to work with my hands or with my back, like my parents did. I study so I can inspire other young Latino men and work in hopes that there will be more of us. For many it is considered strange to see Latino men in college and not in prison.
In this photo I see a strong bond that has been made in the college life. Basically it reminds me of my friends from high school and how we used to have a really strong bond. Now we don’t really have a strong bond but it makes me think of the friends I’m going to meet soon. However, after a few years here, I’m still searching. I know I don’t come from a super diverse neighborhood, because there are a lot of Mexicans, but I wish there were more Latinos on campus that I can actually relate to. You can talk about the same family issues, struggles on campus and share a common language. That would be cool. I’ll keep looking…
Figure 31

I guess what I was trying to show in this picture was just the general effort of any student really, regardless of their background, what they have to do; study, go to classes for the future. Everyone has their own circumstances that they have to face. For me specifically, coming from a Latino family and having my parents not to go to college, it’s a lot harder for me to be here of course, financially and culturally. That's one of the biggest differences between me and a lot of the other students here at school.

I guess also on an educational level, being brought up speaking Spanish it was a disadvantage, especially since our school system throws you into rigorous English courses and you're expected to know English like you grew up speaking it. I guess my experience with the English language, writing and speaking, was a lot more delayed as opposed to other students. However, I wonder that if there were more Latinos in college and in the educational system promoted if being bilingual Spanish/English and was more respected than it is I know the majority schools perceive one’s home language (other than English) to be less intelligent or that I don’t have a chance to be a good student.

All four participants expressed their feelings about the lack of a Latino presence on campus, however there was a sense of optimism that one day there will be a larger Latino populations on
campus. The majority of participating students felt that the lack of Latinos on campus was detrimental to their own success as they thought the general student population did not understand their experiences and their struggle. On the other hand, students also felt very lucky to be on campus because they are aware that others do not have the same opportunity to be attending a higher education institution. In figures 32, 33, 34 & 35, Eric, Betty, Steven and Kara shared their thoughts on the population of Latinos on campus.

![Figure 32](image)

Figure 32

At first I thought is budget really so bad that this school cannot afford to even clean the windows? Then I was like, “You know what, if you look at the perspective it’s like … we are in school and have a ton of stuff going on, we can see the future but it looks blurry.” We know that there’s something on the other side of that window but you can’t really see what it is… In my perspective I have this going on and all I can think about is that I want to get somewhere in life. I just think about how important it is for us [Latinos] to stick together. We are all in it together, but it feels lonely sometimes. Where is it? What is it that I’m going to accomplish? That’s how I see it. It’s like we don’t know where we’re going but we know we’re going somewhere.
I like East Commons just because it’s very interactive and that’s where most people have a chance to talk to friends and they have some time to eat and chill. I thought it was interesting how if you kind of pay attention to the different shops they catered to different ethnic tastes, yet, they kind of represent stereotypes. Because most Caucasians or white girls are in the Jamba place, I’m not sure what it’s called, Juice It Up? If you go to Panda you can see Asian people. At Rubio’s the cashier and the cook, they’re both Latino. They have Mexican features in them. I don’t necessarily know if that is okay, it probably isn’t, but to stereotype one needs to appreciate diversity.
When we had the old Aztec Center before it got torn down, that's where I usually hung out because I watched all the soccer championship games there. They had the bowling alley and then … it was just a cool place to go and chill and eat and just hang out. Because of the games a lot of different types of people would come around, like, there are a lot of Arabs, and international students and it’s where I would find Latinos who wanted to see the game. I think it would be pretty sick if there were a whole bunch of Latinos that filled up the bar to watch the game and it would be a big excited crowd. Not sure if that would happen, because there aren’t many of us around. It was because of the sport that brought us all together and I thought that was a pretty cool. It happened every other week or so, whenever a new game is on. And that’s where I felt like a sense of being part of the school because we were all watching the game together. I hope it’s the same in the new union.
Figure 35

Alpha Phi was my first home, I guess, okay, well the dorms are kind of a home, but after I rushed the first two weeks of the semester, and all of the sudden I had over a hundred girls that were supportive of me. Even though it wasn't my home, my actual place where I lived, it still was my home for four years. I was able to go there and have just the support of everyone and ... I don't know it felt like something real. I went to a predominately White high school, so I didn't really interact with a lot of Latinos. The sorority is also pretty White, so it felt a lot like my experience in high school. The dorms didn't seem real. They seemed like they were a camp. Maybe that's because I went to dance camps in the dorms throughout high school. The dorms never felt like home. It was like a hotel or something. I didn't necessarily take a picture of the dorms. I liked it, met some chill people but it wasn't...significant.

Each of the participating students had their own thoughts on how an increase in the Latino population would impact their college experience. Kara did not necessarily feel the need to increase the Latino population on campus. Kara was pretty comfortable with the population level as it was, and, in fact, did not really relate to the Latino culture. She felt more comfortable when she was not around as many Latinos.
Hurtado’s (2005) research suggests that students who have their social and cultural needs met on campus are more likely to seek out intentional interactions with ethnically diverse students. Having these needs met can also help an underserved student feel more comfortable in the college environment. Furthermore, these students are also more accepting of differences in populations different than their own (Hurtado, 2005). The participants in this theme section discussed about their social and cultural needs. Generally, participants felt the University meets most of their needs, but there are still some shortfalls. Figures 36, 37, 38 and 39 look at Kara, Steven, Betty and Eric’s viewpoints with regards to social and cultural needs while on campus.

Figure 36

So I took this picture of the Aztec Green area that leads to the trolley is because the trolley is my wheels, because I don’t have a car. Another reason why I took it from such angle and I didn't take a photo it of the trolley itself, because I've had a couple different experiences there. My Shakespeare class, we had to perform a play and so we decided to show it in the trolley station, in this area. We had our entire class, and as people would walk by, they started watching us perform our
play. I've danced in the middle of that area, and it's just one of those experiences that'll stay with me forever, silly as that is. I just feel like, I don't know, it's one of those places on campus where I was able to express myself. The cultural expressive experience was incredibly fulfilling.

Figure 37

Viejas Arena … lots of basketball games, also events there, it’s like everyone just goes there to watch the games and be a part of the campus. I remember when I was in the Casa Azteca program, it was because of their encouragement that I would even bother to go to the games. Going to games and events there, I feel that's where I was most socially integrated with the school and that's where you feel more … like … "Yeah, this is my home; this is my school."
I think it’s really nice how during the farmer’s market they have on campus on Thursdays is kind of inclusive. Usually during the week the closest I get to familiar food is Rubios and Chipotle, but during the fair they include all kinds of different foods. There’s Asian, there’s African food, there’s that of course, stuff I find in my neighborhood like chile con mango. Obviously that’s my favorite place to go. I just really like it how everybody kind of interacts and they are talking. I thought that was pretty cool. It’s too bad that something like this isn’t available everyday.
I’m an EOP student and this area is where a lot of us hang out. This is a place where I feel most at home and close to my culture and neighborhood. It’s a comfortable place.

These four participants were able to find small spaces on campus that met their social and cultural needs. The students showed resiliency by finding those spaces and events that added a little bit of “home” to their experiences on campus.

Chris, Ana, Luke and Stephanie’s thoughts on social and cultural needs are reflected in figures 40, 41, 42 and 43 respectively.
This is the arts and letters building. I took it because that is where most of the foreign languages are housed, including Spanish. I’m a math major, so most of my classes have zero Latinos, but the classes that I have in here feel more welcoming. I don’t feel unwelcome or nervous in that building. I feel like I find like-minded people in there. It’s pretty cool.

I took a picture of the trolley, because I’m from San Ysidro and was in the Casa Azteca program. I lived on campus, but related to everyone who had to commute.
Now that I don’t live on campus I commute on the trolley. Casa Azteca was a place that was great culturally, because most of us spoke Spanish and came from the same neighborhood and they gave me a bunch of information and things that I can do on campus, which was important. I didn’t do anything with the information at first, because I was a little bit intimidated but now I'm a junior, I feel like I have more courage to get involved.

I just am really involved on campus and I think I see myself as leader. I think that it's important that more Latinos step up on campus. It shows the Latino Greeks when we unite, we do have a very strong voice on this campus. I think it's a cool picture, because I feel that my needs as a student are met by my involvement in leadership activities and opportunities to get involved in student organizations.
I feel my cultural needs are met through my involvement in my sorority. It is a Latina-founded organization and most of us are Latina, and those who are not are at least open to our culture. When I go to meetings or other events it is a place where I can be myself and I don’t have to worry about my accent or skin color. I don’t think I would still be here if I hadn’t found these girls.

These four participants were also able to find locations on when their social and cultural needs were met. For Chris, it was the foreign language building. For Ana, the campus trolley station was significant. For Luke, it was Latino Greeks engagement. For Stephanie, it was through involvement in Latino-founded organizations or Latino outreach programs. All eight participants were able to find a niche somewhere on campus—a building, a station, a green space, sports arena, food market or open study space.
Opportunities for Creating a Positive Environment for Latinos

Locks, et al., (2008) states that a positive environment on campus is possible for underrepresented students when there is an opportunity for students to interact with diverse peers and if there is no perceived racial tension. Students should feel a sense of belonging without the need to assimilate. If underserved students feel they need to assimilate, they may feel de-valued at the university. Administrators must look for every opportunity to create positive campus climates for students of color. Figures 44, 45, 46 and 47 outline Kara, Steven, Betty and Eric’s respective viewpoints on what opportunities the school has to create a positive campus environment.

Figure 44

The footbridge near the dorms is such a stable structure for every freshman that lives in the dorms just on the other side. Freshmen year was a time in which I
crossed that bridge at least 5 time’s of campus day. So even now, every time I cross the bridge nostalgia rushes over me and I can’t help but think of, my naïve freshmen self. As much as I was not really into living in the dorms it did create a good environment for me, because I was able to get tutoring through my learning community.

Figure 45

As a math major I go to this building a lot, there's not a lot of Latinos or even Black people. Since there's not a lot of diversity, that kind of intimidates me; like whenever I walk in there and talk to my advisors, I don't know…It just doesn't feel as welcoming for me as other colleges. I think it would be a better environment if there were more Latinos in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) majors. I mean, it's not that the professors are mean or anything or unwelcoming at all. The professors care and everything but they're just not…there's not much diversity in class. I guess I feel excluded.
This a photo of our school newspaper that frequently highlights a Latino activist group, like MeChA. It is a youth empowerment group I was fascinated by some of the article. I had no idea we had a group. I guess they are going to get together to help young people from El Salvador or Guatemala or Mexico. When you’re young you just kind of come here by yourself. But of course if immigration gets you or whatever, they have to detain you because you’re a minor and then they have to wait until someone will pick you up. So they are working with shelters of kids who are waiting for their parents to pick them up. I thought that was pretty interesting. It’s nice to know they are looking at real problems. It creates a positive environment, because it shows someone cares about problems in the Latino community.
I took a picture of this, because it’s directional signs. I like it because it shows that the University is responsible for creating a direction for students, especially Latinos. It’s their job to do more outreach to the high schools and to tell the kids that they can make it and come to college. To provide them with the direction they need to succeed.

Overall, Kara, Steven, Betty, and Eric had a variety of ideas the university could take advantage of in order to create a positive environment for Latinos; more outreach, tutoring, and Latino-based organizations that advocate for youth.

Chris, Ana, Luke and Stephanie have their reflections are represented in figures 48, 49, 50 and 51.
I took a picture of the clock tower, but I took it sideways because I feel the school doesn’t try hard enough to bring more student life to the campus. On other campuses I’ve seen spaces where students can create murals or display their art, and here there isn’t anything like that and I feel it is “sideways” thinking. This central campus place is supposed to be centered on its students, right? It’s not always. If it was it would be a much more positive environment.
Figure 49

I took this picture of a girl who sits in the area near East Commons. It’s usually where Latinos, Blacks and Asians hang out. I wanted to take a picture of this area, because I think the school needs to be more aware that it has so many diverse students and the areas where they hang out. They won’t be able to create a good environment for Latinos or anyone else if they don’t open their eyes and pay attention to us.
I took this photo, because I finally got to vote. My parents came from El Salvador in 1988, and this was the first year we could all vote together. In my opinion, there's a very big disconnect between Latinos and civic engagement and going out and voting and stuff like that. I think the school did a very good job like reaching out to a lot of student organizations and tabling and doing Rock the Vote. It's very important that Latinos go out and vote and engage in civic duties and this is my first "I voted" sticker, so it had a lot of significance. I became educated about voting in Chicano studies classes, and I think their participation in doing more outreach and educating Latinos is important to creating a positive environment on campus for all of us.
For Chris, Ana, Luke and Stephanie, having spaces for student engagement, comfort zones, campus encouragement to vote, and the presence of to high school students on campus created a more positive environment for these Latino students on campus.

**Campus Tensions**

According to Noguera (2004), college is usually a student’s first exposure to different ethnically diverse populations. These exposures can have an impact on a student’s sense of identity and can also create sociocultural tensions. The tensions can be very overt or also be categorized as microaggressions. Gonzalez (2002) indicated that tense social situations can play
a role in the type of campus climate a student is exposed to and the level of necessity for campus administrators to be more understanding of the experience of underrepresented students.

Stephanie discussed campus tensions in figure 52:

Figure 52

I took this photo of the main administration of the university, because I think the administration is afraid of letting different ethnic groups take over the school and to make it more of a Latino school than a White school; that they would lose their reputation of being a good school, because it is known to be a Latino school. I feel like it might be the higher-ups because I feel like the power that comes from this building is primarily what rules, so I feel like it might be the power that’s really overseeing and driving everything and not allowing it to really function properly by being inclusive of all students.

Luke’s thoughts on campus tension are reflected in figure 53:
Figure 53

This is the first picture that I took and I was like, "In your eyes you see a water hydrant. In my eyes you see innovation by my people, the Aztecs." I was walking around campus thinking of things that are from my heritage, things that my ancestors may have contributed to society. While I was taking the picture, I was thinking who would have installed this? I turn around and I saw Latino people working on construction and I was like, "Typical."

Luke had a strong sense of racial identity that he brought to the university. He expressed his opinion that labor is honorable, yet if labor is the only work option, it has a negative connotation about the Latino identity and the association to blue collar work. Luke reflected that he will stay in school-so he can work with his mind instead of his back.

Ana’s contribution is in figure 54:
I feel like the monuments, statues, murals, any things that are visual to the naked eye, I feel like it’s more of the White representation. Statues I see are mainly like, the big statue in the middle of campus of President Black. And he’s white, or there’s a mural and it’s got nothing to do with anything other than White people. So maybe I feel like we don’t feel welcomed when we come here. Being that we’re so close to the border, I feel like maybe we would have more of that. Maybe a Cesar Chavez mural by the Spanish colonial building or something similar. I feel like we lack culturally representative symbols. We lack showing that we are diverse and we all have different ethnicities on campus and we’re supporting them as well.

Chris indicated that the student government (Associated Students) is not necessarily representative of the whole student body and the board is not diverse enough to be inclusive of all students.
This picture is pretty typical of AS, they focus on themselves and create this “AS Day” and most people think it’s a bit of a joke, because most of us feel it does not represent us. I haven’t really seen any Latinos in high positions in AS, so I don’t see the point in participating or even paying attention to them.
Eric spoke of the treatment of AB 540 students (undocumented) as a major campus tension for him in figure 56:

Figure 56

I took this picture, because as an AB 540 student I feel like there are not enough resources for me on campus, a lot of staff don’t know what to do with me and I feel totally invisible. I feel like the school is playing “experimental theatre” with us by having us here with no support. It really sucks, if we can’t get what we need, why have us here?

Betty was able to find more publicity on campus that was not reflective of Latinos or students of color with the image of a surfer, as illustrated in figure 57:
Figure 57

This is just another example of how Latinos are not depicted as entrepreneurs or of any importance or significance. I don’t understand why we can’t be looked at in this light.

In figure 58, Steven attributed cultural tension to the lack of affordable housing in and around campus:
I wish there was more affordable housing on campus. I would love to live near or on campus, because I know it’s so good for students. I think it would be good if there were lots of different options. If I try to live near or on campus it is just way too expensive for me so I have to live a few miles away that are not considered great neighborhoods so I can get to school.

Kara felt that the crime alerts on campus are not geared toward keeping students safe.

She thought these alerts focus too much on race, as demonstrated in figure 59:
While I appreciate the crime alerts, I think they are mostly focused on race. I know there are White people that commit crimes on campus, but rarely do I actually see them print “White”. I feel like a lot of people read these and say, “oh, it’s just another Black guy or Latino committing a crime.”

The eight selected students were able to identify many different tensions on campus: student government not being representative, no images of Latinos in positive positions on campus, not enough affordable opportunities to live on campus, the crime alerts focusing on race, and lack of inclusion for AB 540 students. Collectively, photos as reflections demonstrate that it can be challenging for Latino students to feel included in the campus environment.
Summary

This chapter documented student voices through the use of photovoice. Seven themes were discussed. A summary of this chapter identifies the salient findings.

Integration to the Campus Environment. The eight Latino students in this study expressed a feeling that there are a large amount of cliques on campus there is a large Greek life influence on campus. If students perceive themselves “outside” of the cliques or Greek life, they feel incredibly isolated on campus. Among the students involved in this study, three participants were involved in Greek life and felt a little less isolated on campus. Most of the students involved in the study were involved in some type of student organization, but still felt on the perimeter of the social scene of campus. Involved students felt less isolated on campus overall.

University Support. In their initial questionnaire and interview the large majority of the students indicated that the university was culturally supportive. However, during follow up activities, the majority indicated a lack of university support as evidenced in their photovoice (photographs and journal entries). This perception of a lack of support might be attributed to additional time the students had to think more critically about the quality of support they were receiving or not receiving. During an interview, students responded to questions promptly. With the photographs and journal entries, students did not need a prompt response and therefore might have given more thought to the activity. While information and access to the university was seen as supportive, structured programming and intentional opportunities for inclusiveness and social interaction was not.
Culturally Reflective Physical Environment. The eight Latino students, expressed perceptions of superficial lifestyles and culture on campus. Participants indicated that lifestyles included a perceived criteria of preferred characteristics (physically, socially, and academically). This idealized lifestyle can create a constant feeling of needing to measure up to an unreachable standard.

Size of Latinos On Campus. All, but one of the Latino students in this study expressed a need to increase the number of Latinos on campus. One student was comfortable with maintain the current the size of the Latino population. This student felt comfortable in a non-Latino environment as this is not a salient identity for her. While the campus consisted of majority ethnically diverse non-Euro-American, population there existed a sense of preferredness for Euro-American culture.

Social and Cultural Needs. Students expressed that in their first year on campus, they wanted to withdraw from the university or leave and attend a community college. The absence of interpersonal relationships connecting them to other students affected retention during the first academic year. However, students also saw the opportunity to learn how to balance their lives by creating social interactions while engaging in the academic rigors of the university. These skills proved to be helpful when transferring back to a larger campus environment.
Opportunities for Creating a Positive Environment for Latinos. All of the participating students expressed differing ideas as to how a more positive environment can be created for Latinos. Among the ideas proposed ideas were increased community outreach, increased Latino student interest in STEM majors, creating more opportunities for student creative expression, and utilizing the Chicano studies department to engage students.

Campus Tensions. Student identified campus tensions as a dominant theme in their perceptions, which suggests the students faced many psychosocial when navigating the campus environment. Students felt isolated in a campus community that while ethnically diverse, was guided by a preferred group of students. The salient campus tension was the non-inclusive make up of student government, including the lack of culturally diverse images; lack of diversity on university committees, and the perceived treatment of AB540 students.

Among the observations by students was the acknowledgement that knowing how to navigate a large campus environment and create a sense of belonging is important. In a large campus environment, it is more challenging to make friends from other cultural groups and find a support network. It is especially problematic for Latino students as many come from smaller, tight knit communities. This problem is exemplified by the lack of cultural spaces that invited their participation. Offered solutions to the tension of isolation were for students to join a student organization that matched their values and experiences, the need to be more assertive in order to get more involved on campus, to create a study group, and to create more social interactions and meet new people.
CHAPTER SIX

CONTENT ANALYSIS

This study demonstrated how Latino first generation students perceived the university campus climate and environment. Student entries (initial interviews) and Photovoice (photographs of campus and journal writing on their photo reflections) yielded 4,545 statements and notes of perceptions of the campus climate in the selected institution. This data collection method served as a creative way for participants to give the researcher a more realistic view into their day-to-day experiences as students at a designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS).

Using the results detailed in chapter 5 (initial meeting questions and SWOT analysis) and chapter 6 (photovoice and journaling), seven themes emerged about first generation Latino college students and their perceptions about their HSI selected campus. The seven themes were:

- Integration to the Campus Environment
- University Support
- Culturally Reflective Physical Environment
- Size of Latinos on Campus
- Social & Cultural Needs
- Opportunities for Creating a Positive Environment for Latinos
- Campus Tensions

In order to analyze the 4,545 data entries, an online mixed-methods program called Dedoose was utilized to code each entries for analysis. Dedoose is a software program for
qualitative data analysis that allows the researcher to import and export data on observations and manage data to explore its multiple perspectives. For this study, all 4,545 data entries were coded, tagged, and sorted into 27 descriptors that operationalize and/or describe the seven themes and capture the thoughts of the eight first generation Latino students as they negotiate the psychosocial, cultural, and environment perspectives of their college experience.

The twenty-seven descriptors are presented and cross-referenced in Tables 4-8 and were derived from the patterns created by the Dedoose program. Further analysis of the 27 descriptors yielded Table 9, which presents the most frequently used seven descriptors with the highest frequency of entries. These 7 descriptors account for 61.3% of all entries. The salient seven descriptors are also aligned to students’ attributes on each of the seven descriptors.
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Table 4. Frequency of Descriptors by Descriptor Crosstabs
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Table 5. Frequency of Descriptors by Descriptor Crosstabs
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Table 6. Frequency of Descriptors by Descriptor Crosstabs
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Table 7. Frequency of Descriptors by Descriptor Crosstabs
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Table 8. Frequency of Descriptors by Descriptor Crosstabs
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<th>Descriptor</th>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<th>Salient Issues</th>
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<td>Student Perceptions of Psychosocial Tensions</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>Sense of Cultural Awareness (N=68) Attitude Towards University (N=59) Sense of Self (N=52)</td>
<td>• Negotiating stereotypes • Path of hard labor • Privilege • Recognizing race in order to survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude Towards University</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>10.56%</td>
<td>Student Perceptions of Psychosocial Tensions (N=59) University Physical Environment (N=59) Sense of Cultural Awareness (N=43)</td>
<td>• Pressure in understanding individualistic culture of IHE • Struggle to balance life in college environment • Finding a niche on campus • Negotiating superficial campus culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>9.28%</td>
<td>Student Perceptions of Psychosocial Tensions (N=68) Attitude Towards University (N=43) Sense of Self (N=39)</td>
<td>• Perceiving campus faculty as not inclusive of their voice • Voice not in the curriculum • White dominant culture • Not feeling sense of inclusiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of Self</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>9.24%</td>
<td>Student Perceptions of Psychosocial Tensions (N=52) Attitude Towards University (N=43) Sense of Cultural Awareness (N=39)</td>
<td>• Not fitting while in resident hall and isolation • Needing to find spaces of pride to counteract misperceptions • Recognizing different levels of academic preparedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Academic Achievement</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>8.25%</td>
<td>Attitude Towards University (N=37) Student Perceptions of Psychosocial Tensions (N=36) Sense of Self (N=33)</td>
<td>• Managing multiples lives • Peer pressures and pitfalls in their pre-college experiences • Needing to find networks of support and knowing how to access support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Physical Environment</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>7.67%</td>
<td>Attitude Towards University (N=59) Student Perceptions of Psychosocial Tensions (N=35) Student Academic Achievement (N=33)</td>
<td>• Absence of physical environment that is inclusive • Learning the ways of how the university works • Lack of diversity in science and math classes • Importance of study groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Student Life</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>5.19%</td>
<td>Attitude Towards University (N=32) Sense of Self (N=25) Student Perceptions of Psychosocial Tensions (N=25)</td>
<td>• Realization that students are simply an ID number • Negotiating individualistic culture and campus different community • Superficial nature of student life &amp; Latino misconceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of All Entries</td>
<td>2787</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
<td>939</td>
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Table 9. Salient descriptors and dominant attributes
1. The first and most reported descriptor was “student perceptions of psychosocial tension,” which accounted for 11.11% of all student responses (N=505). Three dominant descriptors cross referenced with student perceptions of psychosocial tension were: “sense of cultural awareness,” “attitude towards university,” and “sense of self”. The students’ sense of cultural awareness included the necessity to always negotiate stereotypes of how Latinos are perceived, often based on media profiles. Students’ attitudes towards the university described the path of hard labor involved to make money to attend school, a feeling of privilege to “just be a college student,” and the need to work to fund continuing education. Under sense of self, students described the factions created amongst themselves around race in order to not lose a sense of self.

2. The second descriptor, “attitude towards university,” accounted for 10.56% of all entries (N=480). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions,” “university physical environment,” and “sense of cultural awareness”. Within student perceptions of psychosocial tensions, student identified the pressure to understand the individualistic culture of the university. Within university physical environment, participants spoke of the struggle to learn how to balance varying aspects of their lives in the college environment. Their sense of cultural awareness included the need to find a niche on campus and the challenges of negotiating a perceived superficial campus culture.

3. The third descriptor, “sense of cultural awareness,” accounted for 9.28% of all responses (N=422). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “student perception of psychosocial tension,” “attitude towards university,” “university physical environment,” and “sense of self”. Within student perceptions of psychosocial tensions, participants described the campus faculty and courses as not being inclusive of their cultural voice, feeling they do not
exist in the curriculum, and the need to understand how to access higher education. Within attitude towards the university, students spoke of attending a white dominated campus with many majors not having multicultural representation or being open to different races. Within sense of self, students reported not feeling a sense of inclusiveness.

4. The fourth descriptor, “sense of self” accounted for 9.24% of all student entry responses (N=420). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions,” “attitude towards university,” and “sense of cultural awareness.” Within student perceptions of psychosocial tension, participants identified a lack of feeling a “sense of self” while living in residence halls, and feeling a sense of isolation. Within attitude towards the university, the need to find spaces of pride was necessary in order to counteract how others perceived their local community neighborhoods. Within sense of cultural awareness, participants indentified the challenges of being a student who attended a high school with limited advanced placement (AP) courses, having received less preparedness to enter college, and (for some) negotiating their AB540 (undocumented) status.

5. The fifth descriptor, “student academic achievement,” accounted for 8.25% of responses (N=375). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “attitudes towards university,” “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions,” and “sense of self.” Within attitudes towards the university, students expressed the need to know how to manage multiple “lives” of a university student while also managing family-friends social relationships and expectations. Within student perceptions of psychosocial tensions, participants expressed feeling while in college peer pressure and the pitfalls of their pre-college experiences (i.e. parents not knowing the culture of higher education, and being able to find help on campus, and mananging the
college environment alone). Within sense of self, students identified their constant awareness of needing to find networks of support and not knowing how to access such support.

6. The sixth descriptor, “university physical environment,” accounted for 7.67% of all student entries (N=349). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “attitude towards university,” “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions,” and “student academic achievement.” Within attitude towards the university, students identified the absence of a physical environment that is inclusive and reflective of multicultural cultures, specifically Latino culture. Within student perceptions of psychosocial tensions, participants identified the need to learn how the university works and how to plan their courses. Under student academic achievement, the students consistently identified the lack of diversity in the sciences, math majors, and classes. The importance of participating in study groups to succeed in studies was also identified as an important factor to navigate the college environment.

7. The seventh descriptor, “perceptions of student life,” accounted for 5.19% of all responses (N=235). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “attitude towards university,” “sense of self,” and “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions.” Within attitude towards the university, the students identified the realization that on campus “you are an ID number” and the need to learn how the academic system works. Within sense of self, participants identified the need to get used to and negotiate an individualistic and different campus community. Within student perceptions of psychosocial tensions, participants identified the superficial nature of student life and the misperceptions about Latinos on campus.
Synthesis of Descriptors by Themes

Table 10 provides a profile of the seven themes derived from chapter 5 and the cross-reference with the 27 descriptors derived from the Dedoose data analysis from chapter 6. Furthermore, to further give meaning to the 27 descriptors and the 7 themes identified in chapters 5 and 6, Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) Ecological Model of Human Development is used to highlight how the themes and the corresponding descriptors aligned to the five ecological levels of a student life (personal development and intervening and environmental factors). The Microsystem refers to the individuals and groups that most immediately and directly impact the student’s development, including the student’s immediate and extended family, neighborhood, and peers. The Mesosystem refers to interaction between the microsystem and its connections with surrounding institutions, such as school and church. The Exosystem displays links between a social setting outside the student’s immediate community in which involvement does not have an active role, yet impacts the social and educational context, (i.e. such as regional social, educational, political and economic institutions). The Macrosystem is the broader socio-political culture that impacts student and institutional regulations, policies and practices.
<table>
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Table 10. Profile of seven themes with socio-ecological dynamic
Summary

Chapter 6 provided a snapshot of information from the interviews, photovoice, and journal 4,545 entries as categorized into 27 descriptors through the use of Dedoose. The seven most frequent themes accounted for 61.3% of all entries. The seven dominant themes of the study were as follows: student perceptions of psychosocial tensions, attitude towards university, sense of cultural awareness, sense of self, student academic achievement, university physical environment and perceptions of student life.

The data gathered from the eight first generation Latino students suggests certain patterns of perceived campus climate conditions:

• Students of color created groupings amongst themselves in order to survive in the campus environment.
• Students negotiated a perceived superficial campus environment and tried to align with groups of students who have a perceived higher social capital based on preparedness to university life.
• Students perceived a lack of inclusiveness in courses, majors, and campus life.
• Students perceived an absence of a multicultural campus based on visual representations of campus within the profile of faculty and curriculum. The campus was thus perceived as representing the Euro-American dominant culture.
• Students felt a sense of isolation and took it upon themselves to find campus and community spaces to make their own points of inclusion and create a sense of pride.
• Students struggled to balance the multiple identities of university student, family member and community member.
• Students sensed a lack of diversity in sciences and math majors and saw the lack of any space on campus that acknowledged diversity on campus.

• Students experienced micro aggressions in the form of needing to battle with the perceived misperceptions about the Latino culture and the negative connotations many students have about Latinos. These misperceptions were often guided by the proximity to the U.S./Mexico border and media reports on crime.

The overall profile of the campus climate suggested there is structural diversity on campus, yet the participants of the study did not visually see the diversity, nor did they feel the school is particularly welcoming. Latino students balanced being a student while addressing responsibilities and expectations from home. Participants noted that many other students do not have to negotiate that balance between community, work, and studies as they attend school. The large majority of the study participants reported viewing the culture of the campus as superficial and not supportive of their cultural identity in the context of the general student population unless they chose to assimilate with the culture of campus life. This dynamic was further complicated if a student is AB 540 (undocumented).

Chapter 7 will provide the salient findings of the study, discussion of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was guided by an overarching research question and four sub-questions. The study’s main research question asked: How do Latino first college generation students negotiate the psychosocial, cultural, and environment perspectives of the college experience? Given the importance of a national growing ethnically and linguistically diverse student population of whom a significant number represent first generation college going students the research question points to the need to understand the campus climate of universities through the perspectives of students.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)-Pew Hispanic Center report (2012) indicated that the number of Latinos entering institutions of higher education will continue to increase dramatically. According to the Pew Hispanic Center report, in 2012, the number of 18-24 year olds in higher education increased to 2 million, making up slightly over 16% of all new college enrollments. Furthermore, the NCES-Pew Hispanic Center (2012) reported that Latinos also make up 25% of all 2-year college enrollments, which is one-quarter of all students in the community college system. Lastly, of importance to institutions of higher education (IHE), is that one in four students in the nation’s K-12 school system is Latino and that the K-12 school system forms the pipeline to higher and postsecondary education.

At the higher education level, Latino students are also receiving college degrees in record numbers. NCES (2012) estimated that 140,000 Latinos were conferred a bachelor’s degree in 2010. The dramatic increase in the numbers of Latinos currently in the higher education system and those in the K-12 pipeline calls for university administrators to
understand the implications on the campus environment and examine how inclusive the experiences are for Latino and ethnically diverse students on their respective campuses. This study examined the perceptions of eight first generation Latino college students (who attended the university for at least two years) of their campus environment.

**Research Findings**

The findings of the study are presented in two sections: first as the salient themes derived from chapter 4 (major themes) and chapter 5 (student perceptions of the themes using photovoice and journaling entries), and chapter 6 (the salient descriptors derived from 4,545 student entries) of perceptions of the campus climate at a selected Hispanic Serving Institution; and discussions of the findings using the four sub-questions of the study.

**Section One: Major Themes and salient Descriptors**

In the initial phase of the study first generation college Latino students identified seven themes that spoke to psychosocial, cultural, and environment perspectives of their college experience in a large, HIS university in California university. The seven themes are: (1) integration to the campus environment, (2) university support, (3) culturally reflective physical environment, (4) size of Latinos on campus, (5) social and cultural needs, (6) opportunities for creating a positive environment for Latinos, and (7) campus tensions.

In the second phase of the study, photovoice was used to illustrate and describe the perceptions of the students by each of the seven themes. Personal and community strengths
and perceived campus climate concerns were recorded and reflected upon. Additionally, photo analysis promoted critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through individual and group discussions. Finally, (3) possible considerations for improving campus climate in regards to psychosocial, cultural, and environment spaces on campus as perceived by Latino students were identified.

**Salient Descriptors of Themes**

To ascertain descriptors that gave meaning to the students’ perceptions behind the seven identified themes, Dedoose software, was utilized to code each of the qualitative student entries for analysis. Dedoose allows for qualitative and quantitative analysis to take place using different types of media (word/excel documents, voice recordings and video). Using the 4,545 student entries (consisting of statements derived individual interviews, photo journals, and photo elicitation interviews) 27 descriptors were identified and used to categorize the frequency of student entries. The 27 descriptors were cross-referenced. The findings indicated that seven of the twenty-seven descriptors accounted for 61.3% of all student entries (N=4,545). Furthermore, three descriptors accounted for 30.89% of all student entries, or 1,407 entries, namely, student perceptions of psychosocial tensions, attitude towards the university, and sense of cultural awareness. Behind these three descriptors is the influence of race, privilege, cost of education, balancing one’s life and negotiating campus space, the dominant culture of the campus and the lack of inclusion. The seven descriptors are briefly discussed. In addition, the findings for each of the seven descriptors suggest the following:

1. The first and highest descriptor was “student perceptions of psychosocial tension,” which accounted for 11.11% of all student responses (N=505). Three dominant descriptors cross
referenced with student perceptions of psychosocial tension were: “sense of cultural awareness,” “attitude towards university,” and “sense of self”. The students’ sense of cultural awareness was described as needing to negotiate stereotypes of how Latinos are perceived, often based on media profiles. Students described tensions surrounding the path of hard labor needed to make money to attend school, the privilege to “just be a college student,” and the need to work. Students also described how factions are created among themselves around race in order to survive and not lose ones identity.

2. The second descriptor, “attitude towards university” accounted for 10.56% of all entries (N=480). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions,” “university physical environment,” and “sense of cultural awareness”. Students identified the pressure of understanding the individualistic culture of the university and its competitive nature. Students also spoke of the struggle to learning how to balance their lives in the college environment, as well as the need to find a niche on campus and the challenges of negotiating a perceived superficial campus culture.

3. The third descriptor, “sense of cultural awareness,” accounted for 9.28% of all responses (N=422). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “student perception of psychosocial tension,” “attitude towards university,” “university physical environment,” and “sense of self”. Participants described the campus faculty and courses as not being inclusive of their cultural voice and feeling that they do not exist in the curriculum. They also expressed a need to better understand how to access higher education. Students identified the campus as being White dominated with many majors not having multicultural representation or not being open to different races. Students also reported not feeling a sense of inclusiveness and belonging.
4. The fourth descriptor, “sense of self,” accounted for 9.24% of all student entry responses (N=420). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions,” “attitude towards university,” and “sense of cultural awareness.” Participants identified not having a “sense of self” while living in residence halls and feeling a sense of isolation. The need to find spaces of pride to counteract how others perceived their local community neighborhoods was also discussed. Finally, participants identified the challenges of being a student who attended a high school with limited advanced placement (AP) courses, and (for some) negotiating their AB540 (undocumented) status.

5. The fifth descriptor, “student academic achievement” accounted for 8.25% of responses (N=375). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “attitudes towards university,” “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions,” and “sense of self.” Students expressed the need to know how to learn to manage multiple “lives” of a university student while also managing family-friends social relationships and expectations. Participants expressed feeling peer pressure and the pitfalls of their pre-college experiences, such as, parents not knowing the culture of higher education and not being able to find help on campus. Students identified a constant awareness of needing to find networks of support and not knowing how to access such support.

6. The sixth descriptor, “university physical environment,” accounted for 7.67% of all student entries (N=349). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “attitude towards university,” “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions,” and “student academic achievement.” Students identified the absence of a physical environment that is inclusive and reflective of multicultural cultures, specifically of Latino culture. Participants also identified the need to learn the ways the university works and how to plan their courses. Students consistently
identified the lack of diversity in the sciences and math majors and the importance of participating in study groups in order succeed in college.

7. The seventh descriptor, “perceptions of student life,” accounted for 5.19% of all responses (N=235). The most dominant cross-referenced descriptors were: “attitude towards university,” “sense of self,” and “student perceptions of psychosocial tensions.” Students identified the realization that on campus, students are an “ID number” and the need to find ways to understand how the academic system works. Participants identified the need to become aware of and negotiate an individualistic and different campus community. Finally, participants identified the superficial nature of student life, and the misperceptions about Latinos on campus often driven by media messages.

Section Two: Discussion of Study Sub questions

In this section, a discussion of the findings that correspond to each of the four sub-questions is presented. The first sub-question asked was: What are the pre-college experiences that Latino students bring to the university environment relative to familial relationships and support, academic preparedness and their sense of identity that will make them successful? The findings suggest:

a. Pre college experiences. Although the numbers of Latino students in the selected campus are significant, students reported feeling like “foreigners” in the higher education environment and feeling alienated and alone on campus. All eight Latino students in the study are first-generation and reflected on their lack of social capital in regards to the necessary skills needed to succeed as compared to other students. The students described the
need to fully negotiate the campus environment and psychologically negotiate the socio-cultural tension of fitting in while separating themselves from their cultural backgrounds.

b. Familial relationships and support. Students in the study discussed the role each of their families played in their success that allowed them to be accepted into the university and as university students. All of their families continue to play a huge role in their lives as students. Families are a source of encouragement, support and comfort in the form of providing safe space and encouragement. Students struggled to gain independence as young adults while still negotiating the strong ties to their family. Students felt the importance of making their families proud of their academic experiences as first generation college students and, in turn, also serve as a role model for their younger siblings. While sensing the academic pressures of their pre-college and college experiences, they acknowledged that such pressures drive them to be successful students.

c. Academic preparedness. Students discussed the few teachers and school counselors who had an influence on their decisions to attend college. They also discussed the need for and influence of mentors/family friends as related to university preparation and the application process. None of the parents of these students attended college, therefore parents were not a point of assistance for them when preparing to attend college. All participants indicated that they had to look outside of the home for assistance with academic courses in order to succeed, but acknowledged that their families provided moral support and encouragement.

Several students talked about how they utilized books and the internet to prepare themselves for college without the help of any one person. They independently figure out all of the requirements needed to get accepted and enroll. All of the participants acknowledged
this was a challenging process and that their ignorance may have caused them to miss out on some opportunities. Each of the participants shared they are planning to or are currently helping younger siblings academically prepare for college.

d. Sense of identity. Students discussed the need to negotiate their identity as Latinos on a campus that does not lend itself to acknowledgement and celebration of the Latino identity. They stated they are creating their own “safe spaces” on campus where they can speak a common language and discuss relevant issues for their community. Students perceived a lack of culturally diverse images and physical spaces related to their Latin American roots.

The second sub-question asked: What are Latino students’ perceptions of the university campus climate and in regards to sense of place, sense of belonging and living on campus based on college generation? The findings suggest:

a. Perceptions of campus climate. Given the perceived dominance of Euro-American culture on campus, the participants of the study expressed that they experienced overt racism in the form of stereotypes about Latino people and local Latino communities near the U.S./Mexico border. This was insulting to the majority of students who have family near the border or across the border. In order to negotiate this racism, students intentionally did not share where they live information regarding commuting modalities with peers in school. Students expressed that the dominant Euro-American culture was perceived as the preferred culture and any other culture is viewed as “not as smart” as Euro-American peers and professors. For many students, this perception caused a subconscious cultural clash that Latino students are somehow inferior to their Euro-American peers. Latino students further expressed that they negotiated
these clashes by actively seeking out articles in the school newspaper about Latino students, advertisements in Spanish that are generally posted in certain social science departments or near the Spanish/Portuguese department, as well as seeking other Latino students through intentional involvement in student organizations that are specifically geared towards Latinos.

b. Sense of place. Participants felt a sense of isolation on campus. They sensed a lack of a critical mass of Latinos on campus and many felt alone. Students also indicated they were not able to fully integrate into the campus community due to its competitive and individualistic nature. Students expressed feeling a lack of representation in advertisements on campus and that the misrepresentation of Latinos created a psychosocial isolation tension affecting their sense of place. The participants felt it was hard to find a sense of place and fit in, as “whiteness” was the dominant message in the majority of campus spaces. Thus, navigating campus culture impacted their comfort level, social integration and sense of place.

c. Sense of belonging. The students defined sense of belonging in various ways. Kara found a sense of belonging through her work in a campus office and by finding mentors amongst the staff. However, Betty did not feel a sense of belonging because she felt there was not enough Latino representation in the majority of campus student and faculty committees. Luke reflected that he was concerned about inclusivity in the curriculum. These issues are examples of how a student’s sense of belonging can be affected by cultural inclusion on campus. In addition to factors involved in isolation is the impact of physical space. Students remarked that the absence of culturally inclusive physical spaces that impacts this perception of a welcoming environment.
d. Living on campus. A majority of the students who lived in the residence halls during their first year of college were not able to gain a sense of place on campus. They felt isolated on their residence hall floor and did not find much in common with their roommate or floor mates. Three of the four resident students expressed a need to find/create their own support network outside of the residence halls in order to have a community of friends.

The third sub-question asked: What are Latino students’ perceptions of the university campus climate in regards to feeling safe and comfortable, sense of social integration and academic achievement based on college generation and housing status? The findings suggest:

a. Feeling safe and comfortable. Two of the eight participants, Luke and Kara, felt fully integrated into the campus environment. The two lived on campus during their first year. Generally, the students felt safe on campus, however they did not always feel comfortable. Several of the students noted the negative perceptions students have about the border cities of Baja California and found it challenging at times to not feel labeled as “bad” for being Latino among peers and professors. The two students who were AB540 (undocumented) also did not feel comfortable due to the constant bewilderment and alienation they felt by not wanting to disclose their undocumented status. Despite these feelings, the Latino students in this study listed academic achievement as a priority and as a means of upward mobility for themselves, their families, and community.

b. Sense of social integration. Participants in this study noted several tensions on campus. These tensions included negative stereotypes, lack of inclusion and resources for AB540 students; financial instability of the California State University system, access to the university,
lack of positive portrayals of Latinos on campus, a student government that is not representative of underserved students, and the “lumping” of all Latino groups as a minority group. Each student was able to articulate the tensions on campus regardless of whether or not they felt integrated or isolated on campus. Even Kara, the most assimilated of all of the students in the study, was able to articulate what she believes were campus tensions or the need to learn the expectations of the dominant culture in order to be integrated on campus.

c. Academic achievement based on college generation and housing status.

Latino students’ perceptions of the university campus climate with regards to sense of place, sense of belonging and living on campus varied among the participants. Students who lived on campus did not necessarily have a higher sense of belonging or sense of place with the university. In the case of Ana, Betty and Luke, they did not feel an increased sense of belonging due to living on campus. None of them were able to find a sense of community within the halls and, in fact, sought out different communities on campus. Ana found that Casa Azteca, a Latino academic student support system, was beneficial and enabled her to have strong ties back to her neighborhood. Betty found clubs and organizations that focus on AB 540 students (undocumented) as important to her survival in campus. Luke found a Latino fraternity that helped him be involved in student and community life. None of the students noted that living on campus was a contributing factor that increased their sense of campus place or belonging. Kara, the most culturally assimilated to the dominant culture of the campus, was able to make friends in the halls, but also created stronger bonds with her sorority. Her characterization of living on campus is that it felt like “being at summer camp.”
The fourth sub-question asked: *How do Latino students’ perceptions of campus climate influence their awareness to negotiate psychosocial tension, cultural experiences, and academic pursuits?* The findings suggest:

a. *Awareness to negotiate psychosocial tension.* For the majority of the students, the psychosocial tensions were described through everyday micro-aggressions or activities that go unnoticed and are perceived as normal. Examples of micro-aggressions included not seeing Latinos included in university advertisements or in photographic portrayals of student life on campus. Latino students also identified overt racism on campus. For example, campus crime bulletins appeared to be centered on people of color or on the cultural/racial descriptions offered of students who broke a law. Additionally, Latino students did not feel represented in the higher leadership positions of student government and in important campus committees. The lack of Latino leadership in positions of administration in colleges and departments was also noticed by students. Lastly, the students documented the perception that their voices were not being heard in important campus matters.

b. *Cultural experiences.* Latino students described the campus environment as a geographical space that offered a sense of feeling isolated and alone on campus. The perceptions among the participants of this study was that there was not a critical mass of Latinos on campus and there was not significant cultural representation. Yet, as a Hispanic Serving Institution, Latinos make-up over 25% of the student population. Latino students also expressed that they feel pressure to live up to the superficial campus culture that is guided by body image and makes working out and going to parties the expected social behavior. The majority of the students felt this expectation was a conflict with their own values of wanting to maintain their bicultural
identity. Nevertheless, students resisted the pressure to fit socially, they still participated in the perceived campus culture through certain student organizations such as MEChA.

c. Academic pursuits. A student’s feeling of isolation can be a factor in their academic pursuits. Students expressed the feeling that they needed to create a community of like peers with similar backgrounds because they share the same struggle of negotiating the hard work of being a student on campus. They felt that creating a community of like peers assisted them in creating a network of support that then helped get them through the university.

**Discussion of the Finding**

Revisiting the Study Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework presented in the early chapters of this study incorporated the research of Tinto’s Student Integration Model (1993), Astin’s Input-Environment-Outcome Model (1993), and Scannell and Gifford’s Tripartite Model of Place Attachment (2010) as a comprehensive way for institutions of higher education to respond to underrepresented students in the college campus, (specifically Latino students). While these three models combined, Tinto, Astin and Scannell and Gifford provide a foundation for the integration of ethnically diverse students on campuses that are insufficient in addressing inclusion, authority of self and equity, and civic engagement.

Tinto’s (1993) work is based on student integration and asserts that a student’s ability to socially integrate into the campus climate depends on their ability to commit to academics and the institution. Additionally, a student must conform to the institutional norms of the university in order to be successful. According to Tinto, one of the most important factors in a student’s
ability to transition to the campus climate is based on the notion of severing all ties with family, high school friends, and former communities. Contrary to Tinto, the findings of this study indicate that Latino students need the university to recognize their home-community experiences and the importance of being socially, culturally, and politically connected to their communities. While Tinto’s asserts that the “rites of passage” allow for students to begin distancing themselves from their communities, Latinos must require a balance in navigation of higher education and maintaining their sense of identity and culture in order to integrate into the college community.

Astin’s (1993) conceptual I-E-O framework looks at campus climate and its effect on students. Specifically, the theory considers environmental and psychological effects of the campus climate on students. For the eight first generation Latino students, Astin’s theory is relevant because a student who is not able to fully develop and become acclimated to the campus will internalize the campus climate as unwelcoming. Astin’s theory pertains to Latino students as the theory acknowledges the importance of familial relationships in educational experiences and how a student’s environment can have a positive effect on their development and ability to feel safe on campus. For the students in this study, the issue of being acclimated to the dominant Euro-American campus climate and sense of safeness was expressed as problematic.

In the case of Scannell and Gifford’s (2010) Tripartite Model of Place Attachment, the model centers on the inclusion of underrepresented students and the importance of valuing the campus. For the Latino students in the study, inclusion and belonging was expressed as the need to be represented on campus and engaged in selected student organizations. The Latino students in the study identified the need for creating campus place attachment through a strong and welcoming cultural, academic, and campus leadership model.
Thus, after analyzing the data of chapter 4, 5, and 6, this researcher proposes to add additional elements to the study’s conceptual framework; namely, three elements based on the construct of cultural democracy and presented in an expanded conceptual framework so named “Student Integration of the Cultural Democracy on Campus and Support Systems” as shown in figure 60. The concept of cultural democracy is comprised of a set of related commitments that include protecting and promoting cultural diversity and the right to maintain one’s culture for everyone in our society and around the world, encouraging active participation in community cultural life, enabling people to participate in policy decisions that affect the quality of a community well-being, and assuring fair and equitable access to cultural resources and support.

Knowledge to Participate in Civic Decision Making

Figure 60. Student Integration of the Cultural Democracy on Campus and Support Systems
Three elements of cultural democracy are useful to integrate into Figure 60 from the work of Pearl (2012), who conceptualizes cultural democratic education using seven constructs: authority, inclusion, knowledge to solve important personal and social problems, democratic citizenship, inalienable rights, optimum learning environment for all, and equality in schooling (Olivos, Jimenez-Castellanos, Ochoa, 2011, pp.103-109). Given the findings of this study, the three suggested elements are: authority of voice, knowledge to participate in civic decision-making, and inclusion.

Authority in a democracy is by consent of the governed. Thus, this element calls for participants in the educational institution to be critically active agents in negotiating what is being taught, the right to view social phenomena from multiple perspectives, and the right to have a sociocultural voice in the examination of such perspectives. Students should no longer be docile in their learning and instead serve as active agents in their education. (Olivos, et al., 2011, pp.104-106). Having the knowledge to participate in civic decision-making is a direct result of a student’s interaction with the educational environment. In order to be an effective citizen, a student must feel a sense of social integration that is reflected in their ability to adapt to a work environment after a baccalaureate education, have mastery of academic skills, and have a strong sense of self to contribute to their community (Olivos, et al., 2011, pp.103-109). Inclusion in the environment includes the right to belong, the right to live on campus with a sense of place attachment, and the right to be an active participant; all necessary characteristics to be integrated in the university campus (Olivos, et al., 2011, pp.104). Including these three specific elements of cultural democracy into the study’s framework calls for a university and its leadership to view all students as active agents in their learning and as participants in an educational democracy.
Integration of Student Voices in Campus Climate

To further contextualize the voices of the eight first generation Latino students, the participants of this study were placed into a matrix based on two dimensions: Inclusion and Authority of Self. The students in this study, with respect to high and low perceived Inclusion and Authority of Self, are depicted in Figure 61, a matrix illustrating the placement of the student participants in regards to the above-mentioned factors.

Figure 61. Participant inclusion and authority of self matrix

Chris was placed under “High Inclusion and Low Authority of Self” and was a non-resident student at the selected campus. He generally feels included and supported due to his involvement in campus student organizations. However, in regards to authority of self, Chris was lower on the matrix and does not have a strong sense of self. In his photos and journals, Chris discussed the pressure to be fit, attend certain parties, and participate in the
superficial nature of the student body. Chris reflected that he felt it superficial, but he still participated by going to the gym and losing weight in order to better fit in.

Ana was placed under “Low Inclusion and Low Authority of Self” and was a resident student at the selected campus. There are tensions in her life with regards to how she is unable to connect with both the campus community and her home community near the U.S.-Mexico border. There is a general perception that students who live on campus feel very connected to the university community. Additionally, Ana participated in a campus ethnic mentor program. However, Ana did not feel connected to the university. She indicated throughout her journals that the friendships she made at school were not as authentic as her friendships at home. Ana also stated that she felt more able to get involved in clubs and organizations while living at home. Living on campus made her feel isolated because she did not find commonalities with students in the residence halls.

Eric was placed under “Low Inclusion and Low Authority of Self,” was a non-resident student at the selected campus, and was an undocumented (AB540) student. There was constant tension in Eric’s life while feeling a sense of alienation, because he cannot always be himself due to fears of outing his undocumented status. Eric is low on campus inclusion and low on authority of self. He has managed to get involved in a student group founded for AB540 students, however he does not feel a strong sense of self because his life can change for him at any one incident. Eric does not feel included in the campus environment.

Steven was placed under “Low Inclusion and Low Authority of Self” and was a non-resident student at the selected campus. Like Ana, Steven participated in a campus ethnic mentor program, yet generally felt isolated on campus. He has never felt a sense of campus
community and felt more comfortable interacting with others in his ethnically diverse community. Steven felt social pressure from the demands of his family and the community, and academic pressures to progress in his studies at the university.

Kara was placed under “High Inclusion and High Authority of Self” and was a resident student at the selected campus. Kara felt a high sense of inclusion. Of the participants in the study, she was fully assimilated into the campus environment. Participating in a traditional sorority allowed her to feel fully integrated on campus. She was, however, very concerned about how she is perceived by others, especially in relation to her skin tone. Kara had a darker skin tone and preferred to be identified as Italian rather than Latina. Generally, she does not identify with her Latino culture in the university environment, which may be the reason she is able to assimilate so easily. She also has a strong authority of self because she has been exposed to many resources and communities on campus and felt a positive sense of place with the university.

Luke was placed under “High Inclusion and High Authority of Self” and was a resident student at the selected campus. He was the only male student that placed high on both the inclusion and authority of self-dimensions, felt very connected to his Latino background, has taken a number of Chicano/a Studies courses, and was very proud to be educated about his culture. Luke has also been fully integrated into the campus environment by getting involved with a Latino-founded fraternity. He has had many intentional interactions with Latino students and he has had the opportunity to participate in high school conferences sponsored by his fraternity. These interactions have allowed Luke to gain a high authority of self and acquire the skills necessary to manage the university environment.
Stephanie was placed under “Low Inclusion and High Authority of Self” and was a non-resident student at the selected campus. She was involved in a Latino-founded sorority. While she felt very connected to her sorority, she did not feel connected with campus overall. She was very critical of the campus climate and did not feel that the campus is a welcoming environment for Latinas. However, Stephanie did have a high sense of self, expressed a high appreciation for her cultural background, and fully identified as a Latina.

Betty was placed under “Low Inclusion and High Authority of Self” and was a resident student at the selected campus. She fully identified as Latina and has taken courses in Chicano/a Studies in order to become more educated about her cultural background. However, she felt isolated within the campus climate because she was also an AB 540 (undocumented) student. Betty’s tensions revolved around a sense of alienation as she felt it necessary not to let others know about her AB 540 student status. However, Betty was also very critical of the campus environment due to the lack of cultural awareness. Her studies have encouraged her to be more critical conscious of socio-political issues impacting low-income people. She has been able to apply this knowledge to her experience on campus.

Limitations of the Study

This study examined the perceptions of eight first generation Latino students. A number of limitations are identified: First, the study is exploratory in nature in order to examine the perceptions of first generation Latino students in regards to their perceptions of the campus climate. Second, he study involved only of eight students from the fall 2010 cohort at one
California State University/Hispanic Serving Institution. Third, the design of the study is qualitative in nature and used mixed methodology (interviews, photovoice, and journaling) to capture the perceptions of eight selected first generation Latino students based on residency status, entry GPA, SAT profile, and campus attendance for over two years. Every attempt was made to select students who were representative of a CSU campus that is recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution. Fourth, the analysis of collected data (4,545 student entries) of the eight first generation Latino students is based on self-reported perceptions of a university campus and is only a snap shot of students’ lives in the present moment. Fifth, the use of photovoice is considered an exploratory research method as there have been few published articles utilizing the method. However, this method is gaining credibility as the world community is becoming more interconnected. Researchers are venturing out into different countries where they may not be able to communicate with language, but can communicate through the use of the photovoice method, therefore allowing subjects to “give voice” to their story without sharing a common language. This is a method that can also be utilized with underserved populations that may not have the social capital to communicate their needs yet can communicate their concerns through images. Finally, the researcher that conducted this study has served as a student affairs professional. Participants may have not responded as authentically or candidly due to the employment placement of the researcher. The researcher attempted to control for this factor by explaining her role as a researcher and not as a student affairs professional during the various phases of the study. This distinction was explained throughout the various consent forms, at the beginning of student interviews and photovoice, and while discussing journaling. During each phase of data collection the researcher also emphasized that there were no “right or wrong” answers to the questions posed during the study.
Implications for Further Research

Examining the campus climate through a visual technique and social justice lens can provide a new framework for looking not only at Latino students in the environment, but other underserved populations in the college environment. The involvement of a larger sample of first generation Latino students should add to the generalizability of the study findings and promote the finding that more than structural diversity at an institution matters when creating an inclusive environment for all students. Sociocultural and socio-psychological well-being should be considered when creating culturally competent campus environments.

By examining the seven themes derived from the study on campus climate, researchers can examine the implications of the psychosocial and environmental tensions found in the campus climate of a university; specifically a university with a dominant culture of Euro-American, yet a make-up of the students is majority ethnically diverse. The themes identified in this study need further examination and include: integration to the campus environment, university support, culturally reflective physical environment, presence of Latinos on campus, social and cultural needs, opportunities for creating a positive environment for Latinos, and campus tensions.

Specifically of importance is the need for universities to understand the dynamics of first generation Latino students’ perceptions of sense of self, sense of belonging, sense of campus isolation and climate, and the available academic support needed to enable students to successfully navigate the academic university environment.

The use of Photovoice as a qualitative research tool needs to be explored as a social literacy pedagogical techniques for eliciting dialogue as proposed by the filed of critical
pedagogy and problem posing education. Such approach seeks to name problem, the perceived conditions contributing to the problem, and the options, alternatives and solutions to the problem (such as campus climate).

Another focus of follow up research on campus climate addressing first generation college going ethnically diverse students is their marital status. What are the psychosocial and financial conditions faced by single parents, married couples and families with children? Are there perceived differences in university campus that are urban versus rural in regards to university climate?

This study also suggests (e.g., Luke and Kara) that in the case of bilingual-bicultural students, to what degree do their biliterate and bicultural background hinder or promotes their ability to manage the university campus climate? The study also begs the question of not only a larger cohort of students, but also to be follow as they proceed to their 2
d, 3rd, and 4th+ years in college. What changes occurred in their lives and psychosocial world?

The introduction of the Brofenbrenner perspective of the ecological environment of higher education and how first generation ethnically diverse students engage and manage the campus climate also merits consideration for a deeper multidimensional assessment of how a university campus manages its psychosocial environment. This study provides a framework that should be further tested, namely the “Student Integration of the Cultural Democracy on Campus and Support Systems Model”(Hernandez, 2012) at other institutions in the California State University system. Expanding the study to focus on gender identity and additional issues of cultural democracy is also suggested. Lastly, more campus climate research needs to be completed in order to deeply examine the merits of living on campus, versus commuting to campus, creating a more thoughtful campus inclusion policy, and how a university campus can
be more culturally democratic.

**Final Reflections**

In my 10 years of experience as a student affairs professional, I have seen much research about underserved populations in higher education. Many times, the research focuses on aggregate numbers and attempts to fit these populations into a set box of what is perceived as the “ideal” student (grade point averages, SAT scores, how many awards they can rack up). Rarely do we, as administrators, take the time to ask the student to tell their own story. When I thought about doing my dissertation, I wanted to take the opportunity to ask Latino students about their story; Where did they come from? What challenges did they overcome to get here? How do they fit into the campus community? Through my relationships with students, I have heard these stories, but rarely have they been captured in a scholarly way for sharing with the broader education community. These stories are rich and, if we took more opportunities to listen to these stories, we can better use these experiences to guide our work and make the campus environment better for future students. This research has also allowed me to more concretely name the issues that our students are experiencing and to share these issues with colleagues.

Researching the Latino community is especially salient for me because, as a first generation Latina student myself, I remember the struggles to negotiate the “system” without the social capital to understand what I needed to do to go to college or to be a better student while in college. I barely graduated with a Bachelor’s degree. There were many times I was not sure I was going to make it; times I felt lonely and wanted to give up and drop out. This research is personal, because I look at this as an opportunity to make it a better experience for another first generation Latino student. That is my story.
REFERENCES


Tinto, V. (1982) "Limits of theory and practice in student attrition" *Journal of Higher Education* vol.53 no.6 pp.687-700


Appendix A: Informed Consent Documents
San Diego State University & Claremont Graduate University Consent to Act as a Research Subject

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators: This research study is being conducted by Yvonne Hernandez, a doctoral student in the School of Education at San Diego State University/Claremont Graduate University. Dr. Alberto Ochoa, Ed.D. & Dr. Philip Dreyer, Ph.D. are her supervising professors. You are being asked to participate, because you are from the fall 2010 cohort of Latino students that are either first or second college generation at a university in California.

Description of the Study: As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a brief initial interview with demographic questions to determine eligibility, including, name, age, year in school, racial/ethnic background and level of father/mother education. 30-minute initial meeting where you will be provided a consent form and a preliminary set of questions about your perceptions/feelings about the campus climate in the areas of sociocultural, supportiveness and ethnic representation.

You will be given a camera and notebook and asked to take photos during a 7-day period about your experience on campus and to journal about your photos in written form with the notebook provided.

Participants will then participate in a 60-90 minute interview to discuss the photos and journal that will be audio-taped and supervised by myself in a Student Life & Leadership meeting room. You are able to skip any question without penalty.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study will focus on Latino first and second college generation experiences with the postsecondary campus climate in California.

Risks or Discomforts: You may reflect on unpleasant memories during the process of participating in this study. If there are any residual feelings before, during, or after the study a list of campus and community resources are provided below where you can receive assistance.

Campus and Community Resources:

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

APPROVED

NOV 27 2012

CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY IRB
Benefits of the Study: This study may result in a greater awareness of your experience in the college environment. I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study. Your participation may be helpful in creating a more welcoming environment for Latino students on campus.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent allowed by law. You understand that your identity will not be disclosed without written consent as required by law. You further understand that to preserve your confidentiality, data will be written in a way that interview statements and notebook entries will not disclose your identity. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. All research materials, including audiotapes will be kept in a locked safe in my office. As the researcher, I am the only person with access to these records. Furthermore, you understand, that confidential statements and photographs will be used in any publication or presentation of the results of this study.

Incentives to Participate: There is no cost for participating in this study. There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty. You may also choose to skip any questions in the study without penalty.
If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact Yvonne Hernandez at 602-370-6536 or yhernan@mail.sdsu.edu.

You can also contact my faculty advisors:
Dr. Alberto Ochoa, SDSU, 619-594-6676
Dr. Philip Dreyer, CGU, 909-607-1239

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact, the Division of Research Administration at San Diego State University, 619-594-6622 or irb@mail.sdsu.edu; or The CGU Institutional Review Board, which is administered through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP), has approved this project. You may also contact ORSP at 909-607-9406.

**Consent to Participate:** The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board & Claremont Graduate University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Board’s stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been told that by signing this consent form you are not giving up any of your legal rights. You are 18 or older.

A signed copy of this consent form will be given to you.

__________________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

__________________________________________
Signature of Participant

Date

__________________________________________
Signature of Investigator

Date

APPROVED

NOV 27 2012

CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY IRB
Expedited Approval
Reg: 45 CFR 46.110(6)(7) – minimal risk
Submit Report of Progress by: 1/11/14

February 11, 2013

Student Researcher: Yvonne Hernandez
Faculty Researcher: Dr. Alberto Ochoa
Department: Education
Contract/grant number: N/A
vIrB Number: 1097088

Re: Campus Climate for Latino Students

Dear Ms. Hernandez:

The above referenced protocol was reviewed and approved as expedited in accordance with SDSU’s Assurance and federal requirements pertaining to human subjects protections within the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46). This approval applies to the conditions and procedures described in your protocol. Please notify the IRB office if your status as an SDSU-affiliate changes while conducting this research study (you are no longer an SDSU faculty member, staff member or student). This approval expires February 11, 2014.

- Please submit a Report of Progress by: 1/11/14
- The following approved consent form(s) have been uploaded to your protocol file within the vIRB system, within the Supporting Documents section:
  - CGU IRB Approvalpdf.pdf

Note: The SDSU IRB has determined that an additional IRB stamp (SDSU-specific) of approval is not required on this document, and additionally, as these forms are locked to editing through CGU IRB-implemented security measures, we cannot add our stamp. Print a copy of the CGU IRB approved and stamped form to use when documenting informed consent from research participants. Changes may not be made to the consent document without prior review and approval of the SDSU IRB. You are required to keep signed copies of the consent document for three years after your project has been completed or terminated.

Graduate Students: This notification may be used as documentation to register in Thesis 799A.
Attach a hard copy of this notice to your Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee form prior to submitting the completed form to Graduate and Research Affairs - Student Services Division.
Appendix B: Photograph and Publicity Release Form

Photograph and Publicity Release Form

I, ____________________________, give my permission to use my name, likeness, image, voice, and/or appearance as such may be embodied in any pictures, photos, video recordings, audiotapes, digital images, and the like, taken or made on behalf of Yvonne Hernandez’ research activities. I agree that Yvonne Hernandez has complete ownership of such pictures, etc. These uses include, but are not limited to illustrations, bulletins, exhibitions, videotapes, reprints, reproductions, publications, advertisements, and any promotional or educational materials in any medium now known or later developed, including the Internet. I acknowledge that I will not receive any compensation, etc for the use of such pictures, etc. I have read and understood this consent and release.

I give my consent to Yvonne Hernandez to use my name and likeness to utilize in research activities.

_____________________________  ____________
Signature                      Date

If you have questions regarding the research please contact:
Division of Research Administration at San Diego State University, 619-594-6622 or irb@mail.sdsu.edu; or

The CGU Institutional Review Board, which is administered through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP), has approved this project. You may also contact ORSP at 909-607-9406.
Appendix C: Transcription Example

Speaker 1:  Okay. This looks like you're looking into a classroom.
Speaker 2:  Yes, I was in my management class and I was stepping out. One of the classes I really like because there's so many types of people in there. As I was walking out of this restroom, I noticed this little window. Then I thought it's a pretty cool, I guess composite, that I can use in my…
Speaker 1:  Yes.
Speaker 2:  I guess what I was trying to show in this picture was just the general effort of any student really, regardless of their background, what they have to do; study, go to classes for the future. I liked to use that little window there because everyone has a different lens, a different perspective. That was my specific perspective for this specific scene, so I see it and I guess say about it.
Speaker 1:  Yes.
Speaker 2:  Yes. It was kind of random really, but I like it though.
Speaker 1:  Yes. Sometimes it's just whatever strikes you, absolutely. You think it's the same sort of effort and experience for Latino students as it is for everybody else?
Speaker 2:  At least face value it is, but on a deeper meaning or a deeper level, everyone has their own circumstances that they have to face. For me specifically, coming from a Latino family and having my parents not to go to college, it's a lot harder for me to be here of course, financially. That's one of the biggest differences between me and a lot of students here at San Diego State.
Then, yes, I guess also on an educational level, being brought up speaking Spanish first definitely, I guess, was a disadvantage almost to say, especially since our school system throws you into rigorous English courses that you're expected to know English and all this. I guess my experience with the English language, writing and speaking, was a lot more delayed as opposed to other students.
Speaker 1:  You're monolingual at home?
Speaker 2:  Yes.
Speaker 1:  When did you start speaking Spanish, if you don't mind me asking?
Speaker 2:  As a kid, when I was born. My first language is Spanish, until I still remember I think it was second grade when the state passed that no Spanish…
Speaker 1:  The 187, was it?
Speaker 2:  Probably, when they stopped giving Spanish courses or they stopped teaching a course—
Speaker 1:  Bilingual.
Speaker 2:  Bilingual courses, there you go. That's when I first started…
Speaker 1:  [Inaudible 00:02:42].
Speaker 2:  Obviously, I was one of the first [inaudible 00:02:44] to get … I guess I was directly affected by that proposition.
Speaker 1:  Yes.
Speaker 2:  Yes, so it was a struggle being in class where I don't know language, I have no clue about it, yes. I think that's where everything started from, I guess from that point forward, being forced into this nation's language.
Speaker 1: Yes, exactly. It's good to remember that, because that's kind of the lens that you are now looking through. Like you were saying with this photo, that's the lens that you're peering through now.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: As a second language learner. Okay, let's see here. I answered that. Okay, tell me about this photo. It's the quad, right, in front of East Commons?

Speaker 2: Right. I work at the bookstore. I was working at the bookstore underneath, under students’ department. I know every time I sat out there and got food, and I see this building, just this big building with little windows. It kind of reminds me of … it's kind of weird, but of the jail back at home in LA, LA County Jail, how they have the slit windows where you can barely see anything. That just gives me a feel of where I come from, of where I grew up in LA.

I didn't grow up downtown, but I was there a lot. I was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley, which is kind of like an extension to LA. Yes, just being around crime and pretty much not the best neighborhoods, it just gave me I guess a sense of humility and at the same time, a sense of pride to be where I am today, knowing where I came from.

It just makes me happy every now and then, especially since every time I go back home to see my mom she always just wants to see me, especially seeing all her kids do what they want to do.

Speaker 1: It's interesting, too, how you can have a building that is similar looking but it's two very different contexts.

Speaker 2: Right, exactly.

Speaker 1: Yes, that exist.

Speaker 2: Higher education and pretty much …

Speaker 1: Prison.

Speaker 2: Prison.

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: The denial of your liberty for an act that you probably just committed or, nowadays, even if you did or not.

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: Because of the justice system.

Speaker 1: As long as you're brown or black …

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: And you're a man.

Speaker 2: Exactly.

Speaker 1: Especially salient for a young brown man. There's many, many more of you in jail than there are here, which is interesting.

Speaker 2: Yes, definitely.

Speaker 1: Yes, it's really, really great metaphor. Okay, so tell me about this one.

Speaker 2: Oh, this. Right. This was just usually just where I sit, kind of where she was sitting but pretty much over here, at the same place. I do all my studying. I just thought I’d take a picture where I do my studying because again, where I grew up it wasn't really nature-y or green, I guess. Bustling busses off the road, a lot of people in the street going to work and stuff, and school.
It’s almost a contrast to where I grew up. It's always nice to be in the serene, very quiet place, because quiet is almost impossible to have where I'm from. There’s always something going on.

Speaker 1: Yes, I bet. I bet. Is there something in particular about this place that really is especially appealing to you? Is it the being close to nature, being…

Speaker 2: Yes, the fact that we have…

Speaker 1: Near the greenbelt?

Speaker 2: A little. When I first came to San Diego State, I thought it was really interesting. I thought it was a great thing what this campus has, this kind of like this iconic piece in the middle of the campus. Not only that, but to have actual animals just roaming around, I thought was pretty interesting. There's no barriers, really, between these animals and … that was kind of interesting to me. We can coexist, I guess, peacefully. Just the thought of coexisting itself, it can get deep, because of all our problems in the world. We seem to not, obviously have not fixed those things yet. It’s kind of ironic, because we're still living with each other yet we keep neglecting to fix the issues that we have with one another, so yes.

Speaker 1: Yes, absolutely. Interesting.

Speaker 2: That's pretty much what I got.

Speaker 1: Okay, and the extension of that.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: Okay. Tell me about this photo.

Speaker 2: Right. One of my friends, she just recently crossed over to a multicultural sorority. She was actually with me that day. I just thought I'd take a picture of where … I guess in that specific place. At the same time, those letters mean a lot, not only to her, but I guess for me and this university in general. Again, it’s the theme of openness, being able to be accepting of different races and having these individuals who want to come together to better themselves and further their community within this university. I thought that was a nice little component of all these things together, I guess.

Speaker 1: Yes. Okay, cool.

Speaker 2: Oh, yes. This…

Speaker 1: Tell me about this one.

Speaker 2: This was a picture that I really liked because as a kid I would always … My teachers in elementary, middle school and high school would always tell me, “You have to go to college. You have to college.” Obviously, the severity of that signal wasn't really impactful. I didn't really think much about it until senior year, where it was time to transition over. Watching a lot of movies, there's always movies where … especially the fun, like “American Pie,” kind of comedic films where they take place at universities, partying and everything. At the same time, the reverse side to college where you have to be studious and obviously it's for your future benefit. I would always see scenes of campuses and universities. I remember this one, I believe it's Harvard's campus. It was in a film that I was watching. I was like, “Whoa, this place is crazy. It's so beautiful. It's amazing, totally different from where I’m from. I'll probably be there one day.” Not specifically Harvard, but a
university. This was reminiscent to the campus that I always remember seeing. I thought it was kind of interesting too, to see that I'm actually here.

Speaker 1: Yes. This is the kind of thing you saw on TV.

Speaker 2: Right. Right, the students just walking on campus, biking. Then just the large beautiful architectural buildings on campus, yes.

Speaker 1: Okay. Does sort of thing give you a sense of pride or give you a sense of…

Speaker 2: Again, yes, a sense of accomplishment but at the same time a sense of worry, because there's a long way to go. This is just the beginning, really. Before, it was just … This is my ending. Now that I'm here, it's the start all over again. Once I got my bachelor's degree, where am I going to go from there? Lately, I was lucky enough to find out what I want to do. Over the summer I want to move back home and go to law school, then practice law eventually, combine business and law and open a law firm. That's my ending goal. From there, once I reach that it's a beginning all over again to find my next goal, see where life takes me.

Speaker 1: Yes. Okay, so tell me about this one. This is Nasatir, right, the whole gutting of it.

Speaker 2: Yes. I've heard a lot of stories about this building. I had a class in there my freshman year. I just thought it was really interesting how a couple of students, I believe, died from that building.

Speaker 1: Really?

Speaker 2: Yes, the building is really old. I think it was molding from the inside out. There was these dust particles and I guess fungi or airborne fungus. I don't know what it was, but from being in that room for so long these students contracted a disease and it eventually killed them. It was two or three students, I believe.

Speaker 1: Wow.

Speaker 2: Undergraduate students.

Speaker 1: I had no idea.

Speaker 2: Yes, and that's why they hide it. Not only that, but that's probably the main reason why the university decided to renovate that building as well. I guess actually it's a harsh story and it sucks it happened.

Speaker 1: As a student, how does it make you feel to see a building like that on campus and kind of knowing sort of its back history?

Speaker 2: It's scary thinking that the places where you're trying to better yourself and it's supposed to be a safe environment. Still, no matter what you do in life, you can never be too comfortable.

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: You have to be always be on your toes. Obviously things in this situation you're not always in control of them, but you can always make a difference to change it up. The university has and it's doing that now, changes not only directly affecting this incident but at the same time for the general community and the students themselves. Because we're always changing. We always come from different places. I like to say that we are the university. The students are the university. The university would not be anything without its students.

Speaker 1: Right.
Seeing that the university definitely tries to cater to the students as much as possible makes me appreciative because at least we know where our money is going to.

Yes, exactly.

Yes. It’s crazy to see all different changes really within the last three years that I've been here. When I first arrived here, I thought this was it and that's all it is to it, but I was wrong. There's changes everywhere, even when you least expect it. Then this whole LEED platinum building in front of you, and seeing that done. With a new huge building comes a lot of huge, I guess you could say, opportunities, but the same time, problems. You never know what kind of problem you might have with the new building.

Yes, absolutely. Yes, interesting story. I had no idea about this building. That is a little bit creeper to have that on campus. …

Yes, right.

You walk in the door and it’s like…

A reminder. It’s kind of like it gives you the chills.

Yes, like souls were lost in there or because of it. Maybe not in there, but because of it.

Right.

Wow. That's crazy.

I really like this picture. I was just about to go use the restroom. This class was I guess finishing and these students walking out. I just took a snapshot. Looking back I thought it was just a random picture, but then again, I related it to myself. It's almost like it's an exact representation of upward mobility in life and through an education, pretty much. These students are struggling now but continuing to go up in life and keeping up. They’re all just students. You keep going up and reach goals potentially, reach, so we all have a life story within us.

Yes. That is a really interesting metaphor. It really does represent that upward mobility of people on the stairs and they’re just moving, trying to get up.

Right, especially through like … There’s so many social and economic barriers that we have today. That was pretty interesting too, because I guess in essence people like me are breaking those barriers and starting to shake them up and shake up the world.

Yes, definitely. Yes.

This was the same building. It's just from a different angle. From a different side, actually. It's just this crane pretty much on … I guess it’s construction.

Yes, exactly.

I don't know. I just liked the … I just thought I should add the little crane in there, just for, I guess, an artsy feel. Nothing much besides the same story of that building, just seeing it from the other side really.

I guess what we learned is there's another side to everything.

Everything.

Another side or another story.

Yes.

While it may look like progress being gutted, there's still another side of maybe potentially why it's getting gutted.
Speaker 2: Yes.
Speaker 1: Different things like that, so yes, really great picture.
Speaker 2: That's actually very interesting. I never thought of that. Because that's what you see from the freeway, this huge crane. You can say, “Oh, probably they’re building new buildings or a renovation,” but they really don't know the true story behind it, just like anything in life. You may see a façade, but you just don't know really until you know the background history or the background about it.
Speaker 1: Yes. Okay, so that…
Speaker 2: This is the Aztec Center, pretty much where I try to go as many times as possible as a student here on campus, just trying to stay in shape. Also for me, I really don't lift weights but I do a lot of cardio work. I love running, and so that's the thing I like to do, especially now, finals week. It gets really stressed. For me, running is a stress reliever. I just thought I’d add a little touch of my personal interest, and it’s running. I guess running to be depicted, too, through the arc.
Speaker 1: Well, it's interesting. You said something that was interesting to me. You said, “Like all students, we want to stay in shape and work out.”
Speaker 2: Yes. That's one thing. Okay, out of all … San Diego State is a weird culture. It’s almost — I’m going to be kind of harsh — a superficial culture, where … It's mainly due to its location, the fact that it is in San Diego. San Diego is a very touristy, very resort-ish type of city. At the same time, San Diego is a very … It's a wealthy city compared to the different cities. It definitely has these parts where it's very impoverished, but for the most part, UCSD, USD and San Diego State attracts students who for the most part have the means to go here. The reason why I say that is because through the students … I mean, you see those students. You see not a lot of integration. The majority is still Caucasian, which says something. When you look at UCSD, it's different. You see mostly Asians.
When I compare the cultures between UCSD and San Diego State, different mentality, different way of living, different way of living. I guess for San Diego State, being in shape definitely is a huge thing. Ask anyone on campus. Greek life, again, like I was saying earlier when I first met you, was Greek life pretty much runs this school. They are the trendsetters. Whatever they do is the thing that's supposed to be done, when it comes to fashion even, where to go, where to party. Yes, so I think it was kind of a little bit bigger things about the school, the fact that image plays a lot. Again, I was saying because of its location students really want to go here.
I guess I don’t want to generalize too much, but I guess some of the people have the means financially. I guess they don't have to work, maybe. They have more time on their plate, I guess, more time to do whatever they want, more time to waste, time to party and not to really worry about other things. Yes, everyone has their own personal problems, but it is in that regard … They just have that more freedom and, again, to just live the actual "college life" that we all think it is. Yes, working out, looking good, partying, it's very evident in this school. That's the reason why we have this reputation, because obviously the reason why we have this reputation in the first place is because it exists. It's here.
I think just it's a product of all these different little byproducts; its location, the students who go here and then existing, I guess, way of thinking. I think a lot of things don't change. To be honest, I don't know if they will change, that way of thinking, that superficiality.

At first, when I first came here, I thought I didn't fit. I was thinking, “It's not me. I don't like this.” The friends weren’t really the friends that I had back home, it was a friendship based on different things.

Again, like I said, having worked and going to school and then being part now of Alpha Kappa Psi, which is although it's not a multi-cultured fraternity, it is a fraternity nonetheless that has built me in a way that I now know and I will forever know that I can do whatever I want. That itself is part of one of the best things I’ve actually ever done for myself. Yes, that was kind of interesting that you pointed that out, because I wasn't really… I really don't talk about, but it’s there, yes, that superficiality of looking good.

Speaker 1: Yes, it’s just right there under the surface. Yes.
Speaker 2: It lingers almost.
Speaker 1: Yes, it's kind of … Almost kind of over your head and you’re living up to a perceived Southern California lifestyle.
Speaker 2: Yes.
Speaker 1: I think we all kind of get caught up in that. Okay, awesome. Thanks for the photos.
Speaker 2: No problem.
Speaker 1: I actually have a few other questions I just want to ask just in general.
Speaker 2: Okay.
Speaker 1: It's basically three sets of questions. I'm going to ask for you to think about reflecting back to high school and before you started college, and then looking, reflecting back on your first year at SDSU, and then your experience today.
Speaker 2: Okay.
Speaker 1: Thinking back to high school, before you started college, which person or persons was the most influential in your decision to attend college, and why?
Speaker 2: God. This is probably cliché, but my parents, my mother directly, and my father, indirectly. My mother, because she was a single parent. I've seen her struggle … excuse me. Seeing her struggle was always in the back of my head. I'm seeing that and in a way I was like, “I don't want her to be struggling the way she did,” but also the fact that she struggles so much makes me appreciate her that much more. As a kid, I remember her telling me, “Now, go to school. Do well in school. Do well in school.” Obviously, there's a reason for it. It's where we live. Having an education takes you a really long way, and just having education itself won't take you of where you want to go. That's when you have to pull in all the different skills and qualities of yourself, personality, motivations of self. You’re driven, self-driven. Education is a fundamental thing that you have to have in general.

My father indirectly because he just he was an absent father, an absent parent. However, although he was absent, he himself did really well in school. He didn't get to finish college in Mexico, but I figured that even someone who wasn't in my life did well in school, went to school, although didn't finish, I can do the same.
This combination of my parents and their stories definitely motivated me the most, if not the only motivation I have to go to college. Also, besides that, with myself, I definitely have standards for myself and expectations for myself. It is hard to say, because I don't like to have expectations because expectations are really hardly met because there's so many barriers in life. Sometimes even you yourself can hold yourself back from things that you want to accomplish, whether it's fear or embarrassment or whatever it is, but yes … so mostly, the biggest contribution to … for me to go to school would be my parents and then other than that, it would be myself.

Speaker 1: Which person or persons was the most influential in your decision on a major or career choice and why? Was there somebody?

Speaker 2: I don’t like to say one specific person. I just in general, I’d probably say my family. I actually wrote about this in my RDS 500 class. I almost feel as if I'm a martyr, the person that has to sacrifice myself in order to get my family from the working class to the middle class. With that said, meaning that I necessarily can't follow what I really want to do in life. I have to follow through where I may like necessarily, it may not necessarily be my passion but ultimately it brings the financial stability for me and for my family. That ultimately is what I really want, to bring my family out of the working class to middle class. If that means sacrificing my passion, then so be it. It's kind of sad to say because we're always … We grow up in a society where it’s just follow … What we we want and strive for and achieve is this American dream; that car, that family, the house, the perfect career. But it doesn’t really exist, at least for certain people, people like me, since we come from a different place. We come from the bottom. We have to go a different path really, to even get halfway to where we were at. At least for me, my family is the reason why I'm pursuing business. Again, pursuing law is something I personally want to do because I like argumentation, the English language, because the English language can take you so far in life, at least in this world. It sounds funny, I was reading an article on how English is the oppressor’s language. Sometimes if you can't beat them, you have to I guess play with them. Again, knowing the English language and knowing how to alter it and use it for your advantage, it would definitely take me at least where I want to go. It would be beneficial. Again, going back to what I want to do, my family definitely. It’s sad because … I know it's sad, but I just have to deal with it kind of.

Speaker 1: In what ways did your family support your ability to attend college?

Speaker 2: God. Well, my family doesn't have much to begin with, so financially not necessarily a lot. My mother had an abundance of wealth of intangible emotions and motivation and appreciation and love. That to me means a lot more than, obviously, currency. That's really no value besides the value that we give it. Also, we think that it should have, but that would be my response to that question. Everything else pretty much I do find a way to get here and that’s obviously through the student loans and such.
Speaker 1: Yes, definitely. What challenges did you overcome that enabled you to attend college when you were in high school or before you started college?

Speaker 2: Sorry. Can you repeat that question?

Speaker 1: Sure. Reflecting back to high school and before you started college, what challenges did you overcome that enabled you to attend college?

Speaker 2: The fear of moving out. I practically live by myself. Yes, I didn't have much, so if I really move I thought I would starve. Moving down here after … My family can't really help me much. At least my mother didn't. My sisters, they're going to school as well and so they're able to help me out since they're a little bit older and they've already gone through the process of applying for school and going to school. Although my sister didn't move out of the house specifically, she's at Cal State Northridge. She's still able to help me out with filling out certain applications and what to do and to follow through with things.

I guess being also … just being away from my family, being with them my whole life. It was kind of interesting because before moving down here, I've never been away with my family more than a week. Then knowing that I was going to be here for four years in my life was insane.

I think I took a traumatic route when I was moving down here. I thought I was going to starve. I didn't have a job, and so having those stresses pushed me to actually get a job. Once I moved down here at the second day, I had an interview for a job. It was just at Starbucks and I worked there up until this coming summer, so I had a long time there.

Anyway, I guess with the biggest obstacle is actually finding out what I could do and actually getting there, so bridging the gap of what I wanted to do and where I am, where I was then. That was just to almost take a risk, really, of uncertainty, taking a risk of taking … I guess taking a challenge, knowing that … I wasn't sure how I was going to do academically here.

I think the bigger challenge is dealing with my fears really, because nothing else was as big of an obstacle as … Again, I was saying you yourself can be your biggest challenge. I think at that point in time, I was my biggest obstacle, actually getting over myself and my fears and just doing it. Thank God I did.

Speaker 1: Right, exactly. Sometimes that's the biggest hurdle.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: Absolutely. What did you consider your strongest academic quality that prepared you for college?

Speaker 2: The fact that I didn't have, as a kid … even my parents couldn't help me. My mom couldn't help me with my homework because she never went to college and didn't even finish high school. She wasn't able to. Having that already, I had to push myself even more to actually be able to understand my homework and to get it done at school. Because once I went home, I had no help.

Having that lifestyle as a kid and extending that in middle school and high school always motivated myself. I was trying to learn materials as much as possible before the classes ended. I guess it was the biggest factor as to why I was able to do well in school.

I guess it's a subconscious thing and also directing, so that itself, I think … that's the reason why I take school so seriously. I guess that's one level of why I take it
so seriously and also the biggest reason, because that's my pathway to what I want to do, or success.
Yes, so having that interest into understanding that, the material as a kid, probably I guess the biggest tool as to why I think I was able to do well and go to school and be around today.

Speaker 1: What did you consider your strongest personal quality or qualities that prepared you for college?
Speaker 2: As weird as it may sound, I think I would probably say that I'm outgoing. It kind of almost contradicts my way of thinking when I was back in high school. My mom was a very personal person. She's always happy, always has a smile on her face.
When I look back and see my mom and her friendships and where she works now, her co-workers, they all have great things to say about my mother and how she's a wonderful person. I think I took that for myself. I guess I had that same … Probably that's what I'd like to think, I'm like my mom.

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: Just being outgoing and just being open-minded really, and having a positive mind about certain things. I guess the fact that I was open to new things has to be the biggest reason as to why I'm here today. Because although I was really afraid two years and a half ago, no matter how much I was afraid, looking now, it means something.
The fact that I'm here today means that although I was really afraid, I was able to still do it and follow through it and then stay open-minded and just continue with that and take a risk, like I said before. I guess being open minded really takes you a long way.

Speaker 1: Absolutely. Thinking about your first year here at SDSU, and I understand that … just trying to remember, refresh my memory. You did live on-campus?
Speaker 2: I did.

Speaker 1: In what ways did you benefit academically by living on-campus?
Speaker 2: To be honest, proximity really, not to be concerned about anything else than just opening my door and walking to class. Really, that itself just gave me no reason as to why I am not dealing with like I should not do well in school, because I'm at school, right?

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: You know if I want to go to school…

Speaker 1: You live here.

Speaker 2: I live here. If I don’t go to school, it's pretty much my own fault, because of laziness really. My lifestyle as a freshman was completely different than it is today, mainly because I was working. I've never had a job during school. I work during summer, during seasonal breaks.
I would work back at home when I was in high school, but never during school. Having come down here and go to school and work at the same time was a different lifestyle completely. Now, I’ve got to … Working 30 hours a week was already stretching it.
That was a challenge. It was definitely a challenge and I think having to work and go to school and working 30 hours a week, it reminded me about … if I can do
that and still do well in school, I can do anything really. I had a lot on my plate, but at the same I still find a way to take as much and risk as much possible as freshman, because I was new here. It's like a totally different city. I went to San Diego for … by myself, and after I was over with my homesickness, I was like, I am just going to make most of it. I would try to absorb as much possible, meet many people as possible and find out how they got there or how they got here and what they're doing.
For me it was a struggle, because when I would look around my dorm I would see these motivated fresh out of high school students just like me. They really go to college, but they have the time to go partying. They had the time to do whatever they wanted to do. Most of the time, I didn't because I had to work.
That was the biggest challenge for me. It was accepting the fact that my parties were different, at least. I thought it was almost kind of unfair having … I was forced to work obviously. I needed to support myself. I had nobody else to support me. It sucked. I always to tell myself like, why me? Why do I have to work for everything and everyone else just has a free ride almost? Again, that's me being just very dramatic. Sometimes, you have to be and then reflect back on it and realize that there's a much more deeper meaning to it.

For me I like to … To this day, I would never change my freshman experience because it was like the open door as to how I am now and how will be, because I surprised myself that I finished my first year and do the things that I did, so it's exciting.

Speaker 1: Yes, definitely. That's cool. In what ways were you challenged academically by living on campus?

Speaker 2: I guess tying back to my dorm life, most of the people that live in dorms … The reason I lived in dorms was because I was out of the city. Again, SDSU has a policy where if you live outside I guess zoned areas, you have to live on-campus.

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: I guess the biggest academic out of school besides … did you say biggest obstacle living on campus?

Speaker 1: Yes. In what ways were you challenged academically by living on campus?

Speaker 2: Yes, right. It's just the students, that peer pressure, the pressure of going out and partying, drinking, just that temptation was always there because I’d always see the students who had the time to do so always go out. Even when I first made my first real friends, sometimes they would go out, too. They were like, “Come on. Take a break from work and studying. I never see you. Let’s go out.” Things like that, I guess, were probably the biggest obstacles. I guess my life and my comparison to them was my biggest obstacle.

Speaker 1: Okay. Interesting.

Speaker 2: I will always … yes. It’s sucks, because people shouldn’t do that. You shouldn’t compare yourself with people because regardless how much you compare yourself, you’ll never, ever be like them. It’s not that you strive to be like them entirely, but try to be like that person or whoever and their, I guess, circumstances.

I guess what I was trying to … I guess my comparison would be not who they are as individuals, because I like who I am as an individual, but just again, their
financial stability and not having to worry about that. It’s like a push and pull type of thing, trying to enjoy myself down here since I made it this far but at the same time that pull of you’re only going to be here as long as you’re able to support yourself. You can’t mess up in school either.

I think that’s the biggest obstacle. It’s just the black and white almost, way of thinking when comparing myself to other students.

Speaker 1: Yes, I bet. In what ways did you benefit socially by living on campus?
Speaker 2: Greatly, when I was in fact … I was obviously thrown in a living environment when I didn’t know anyone. I was forced to talk to people. At the same time, I was also very eager to talk to people because they’re completely different people that I grew up with as a kid, seeing different faces, seeing a lot of white people. It was a completely different thing, so it was interesting. I realized that just because people are different from where you come from by no means are you not able to talk to them. You can still have some kind of friendship with people like that.

In a way, I benefited that I’m not afraid to talk to anyone now, whether it’s a faculty member, whether you work differently or you’re from a different place. It’s just interpersonal skills.

Speaker 1: Absolutely. In what ways were you challenged socially by living on-campus?
Speaker 2: Socially, I guess, the stereotypes, that lingering superficial culture, not looking like everyone else really. Oh, god. This kind of thing has affected me directly. Looking back, when I was in high school I was 40 pounds heavier. Obviously that, in a way, has directly affected my life. I never worked out ever when I was in high school. I would run, but I wasn’t as big, not as big as today. Anyway, back to biggest social obstacle, it’s just living up to what’s already in place. Yes, pretty much. Looking back now, it’s just impossible. People shouldn’t do that, but it’s inevitable. It’s there.

Speaker 1: Yes. You’re always going to do it.
Speaker 2: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 1: Definitely. Thinking about college experience today, in what ways have you been successful academically?
Speaker 2: Right. I guess the most … Taking a quantitative perspective I have a GPA that’s above a 3.0, so I’m very proud of that. Also, my major itself isn’t the easiest major. Again, tying it back to having my GPA higher than 3.0, I’m proud of that. I’m not going to stop obviously, I’m going to continue to do well in school. Was that the question?

Speaker 1: Yes. Just what ways have you been successful academically [inaudible 00:44:29].
Speaker 2: Yes. Just being able to multitask and just balance my life, really, with work. Just general things really, balancing work with school, social life. At first people struggle because it’s all new, but after dealing with it for quite some time you get a feel for it. You get a sense of a balanced life. Some people don’t.

Speaker 1: Yes.
Speaker 2: Some people can take it too far and just outweigh all the different priorities, but just being able to balance my priorities, really, definitely helped me to succeed and hopefully continue to succeed in school.
Speaker 1: What challenges did you have to overcome in order to achieve that academic success?

Speaker 2: Not depending on anyone. I was also very dependent ... Again, like I was saying, I was very attached to my family. Back at home, in high school ... school wasn’t taken very seriously since, just for the most part, since the people that I grew ... Where I grew up, their parents never went to school. The whole aspect of college wasn’t really as potent as it is in probably different neighborhoods. I was just always with my friends in high school, and just not really taking school seriously. It was just [inaudible 00:45:53] just to get through the day, really. Coming down here, leaving that network or system of friends, I had to support myself in all aspects; academically, socially, financially. Yes, I guess the biggest obstacle is just shifting that blame on myself if I were to fail. I know people will fall short, fail, mess up, but again, just being accountable for myself perhaps had to be the biggest obstacle. It’s so easy to blame other people and just blame it on your circumstances, but you just have to suck it up now, especially as you get older. You’re an adult.

Speaker 1: Exactly. In what ways have you been successful in fitting in with the campus community?

Speaker 2: I guess the first thing that I think of is just being part of Alpha Kappa Psi. I guess the first time I was able to transition to this campus was finding a job on campus. Finding a job on campus, I realized that most of the students who work on campus are working because they need to, but mostly Latino students or people who are minorities. If you were to walk into the Aztec Market, Cuic, East Commons or West Commons, look at the students who are working. They themselves tell a story. They are the working class in this world, in the San Diego State world. Just like when you look at reality, most of you who do working class jobs or poor class or blue collar jobs. I’m the minority. Other people are just the bottom ... at the bottom ladder. I guess San Diego State itself, like I said before, it’s a culture, it’s a dimensional world within the world. Yes. Having that job and realizing all these students here are pretty much in the same boat. I was to befriend them very quickly because we had a lot of things in common. We pretty much grew up in the same type of environments. That was my first gateway to gaining friends, really. Everything else is just history. Now, I guess another big thing that allowed me to fit in socially was understanding the culture, the do’s and don’ts. Yes. It’s kind of weird to say, kind of almost dumb, but...

Speaker 1: What, in your opinion, are some of the do’s and don’ts?

Speaker 2: I guess like don’ts is don’t stick out too much, generally. They always say that to me. I guess in general, people are very nice. People, I tend to see, I realize that, for the most part, regardless of who you are or where you come from, people are very accepting. I think it’s kind of weird now I think, because San Diego is a Republican city. It’s old money. It’s and old money city where a lot of wealthy people live here and
retire here, but San Diego State itself is very liberal in thinking. I think we push that and the faculty does, the school itself does. Still in that case and still in that regard the fact San Diego State is in the city where it’s … probably I’ll say conservative, but we can’t stick out too much. We can’t do certain things. I can’t really mention things off the bat, but you should kind of go with the flow really. Yes, that would be the second thing.
The third thing is joining Alpha Kappa Psi, gaining membership into this network of very successful people. That itself will always be a motivation for me, knowing that I’m around that and I’m around individuals who are like-minded and who want to do great.
The thing I like the most is when you look at AK Psi, it’s not just minorities. It’s everyone, different backgrounds, white people and black people, Hispanic people, Asians, from different backgrounds, whether you’re rich or poor. It’s just… it’s insane. I appreciate it so much because now it’s like my support system. It’s my family away from family.

Speaker 1: Cool. Well, that’s pretty much all the questions that I have.
Appendix D: Questions and Questionnaires

Initial Meeting Questions

Sociocultural Alienation

1. To what extent do the values at [this university] reflect your own values? A lot, a little, or not at all?
2. How often do you feel socially isolated? Often, sometimes, rarely, or never?
3. To what extent do you feel integrated into the [university’s name] community? Very integrated, somewhat integrated, or not integrated?
4. In terms of social and cultural needs, do you feel minority students on campus face more, less, or the same difficulties?
5. Have you ever felt like dropping out of this university?

University Supportiveness & Unsupportiveness

1. In general, do you feel that [this university] is supportive or non-supportive of minority or immigrant students on campus?
2. Do you feel there are student organization options that reflect your cultural values?
3. Do you feel there are adequate opportunities to develop interpersonal relationships with students who are different than you are?
4. Do you feel that [this university] has policies that are supportive of minority or immigrant students on campus?
5. Do you feel there are statues, buildings, signs, etc. on campus that represent you culturally?

Ethnic and Immigrant Representation

1. Would you favor increasing, decreasing, or keeping the same percentage of minority and immigrant students on campus?
2. Have you found it easy or hard to make friends here at [this university]?

Follow-Up Open Ended Questions

INPUT QUESTIONS:

Reflecting back to high school, before you started college…

1. Which person(s) was the most influential in your decision to attend college and why?
2. Which person(s) was the most influential in your decision on a major or career path and why?
3. In what ways did your family support your ability to attend college?
4. What challenges did you overcome that enabled you to attend college?
5. What did you consider was your strongest academic quality or qualities that prepared you for college?
6. What did you consider was your strongest personal quality or qualities that prepared you for college?

ENVIRONMENT QUESTIONS:

Reflecting back on your first year here at SDSU…

1. In what ways did you benefit academically by [living on campus] / [commuting from home]?
2. In what ways were you challenged academically by [living on campus] / [commuting from home]?
3. In what ways did you benefit socially by [living on campus] / [commuting from home]?
4. In what ways were you challenged socially by [living on campus] / [commuting from home]?

OUTCOME QUESTIONS:

In considering your total college experience today…

1. In what ways have you been successful academically?
2. What challenges did you have to overcome in order to achieve academic success?
3. In what ways have you been successful in fitting within the campus community?
4. What challenges did you have to overcome in order to fit within the campus community?