

4-2020

Sense Of Belonging Among Foreign-Born And U.S.-Born Latinx Subgroups At A Community College

Raquel Cotuno

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss>



Part of the [Community College Education Administration Commons](#), [Community College Leadership Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cotuno, Raquel, "Sense Of Belonging Among Foreign-Born And U.S.-Born Latinx Subgroups At A Community College" (2020). *Dissertations*. 528.
<https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss/528>

This Dissertation - Public Access is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons@NLU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@NLU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@nl.edu.

Sense of Belonging among Foreign-Born and U.S.-Born
Latinx Subgroups at a Community College

Raquel Cotuno

Submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
Higher Education Leadership

College of Professional Studies and Advancement

National Louis University

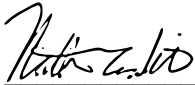
April, 2020

Sense of Belonging among Foreign-Born and U.S.-Born
Latinx Subgroups at a Community College

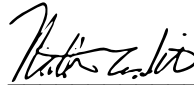
Submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the College of Professional Studies and Advancement
National Louis University

Raquel Cotuno
Higher Education Leadership

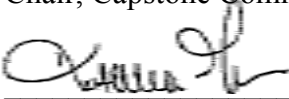
Approved:



Chair, Capstone Committee



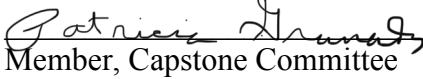
Program Director



Member, Capstone Committee



Member, Capstone Committee



Member, Capstone Committee

April 19, 2020

Date Approved

Copyright by Raquel Cotuno, 2020
All rights reserved

Abstract

This qualitative case study explored sense of belonging among 15 U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinx students at a community college designated as a Hispanic serving institution. To further explore sense of belonging among these students, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both groups of students. The results indicated that U.S.-born Latinx students contributed sense of belonging to instructors who displayed characteristics of equal treatment, genuineness, and support in and outside of the classroom. Instructors who displayed these characteristics made students feel more connected to the instructor and to the college as a whole. Results also indicated that foreign-born Latinx students credited their sense of belonging to being accepted by peers. Joining student clubs was a high contributor to their sense of belonging. Foreign-born students shared that if it were not for joining student clubs, where they share similarities with other students, they would not have felt like they fit in or belong in the college.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the students that participated in this study. I am thankful for the experiences they shared with me and the opportunity they gave me to share their stories. I am also thankful for my committee members who helped me through this journey. Dr. Patricia Granados, who has helped me throughout my professional career over the years and has been my inspiration in higher education. Dr. Jamal Scott, my advisor, has been truly helpful in this entire process and has always had my best interest in mind. Dr. Kathleen Gorski and Dr. Nathaniel Cradit, thank you for the invaluable feedback and the time you spent with me in the classroom. I truly appreciate your time and dedication.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
List of Tables	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Theoretical Framework: Acculturation and Acculturative Stress.....	3
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	7
Definitions and Terms.....	7
Procedures.....	7
Significance of the Study	9
Chapter Summary	9
Chapter Two: Literature Review	10
Viewing Latinx Students as One Population	10
Sense of Belonging Defined	11
Sense of Belonging among U.S-born and Foreign-born Latinx Students	12
Commuter students	12
Discrimination, bias, and cultural engagement.....	13
Persistence, retention, and graduation	15
Country of origin.....	17
Chapter Summary	19
Chapter Three: Methodology	20

Methodology: Overview of the Research Design	20
Methods: Data Collection and Data Analysis	21
Recruitment.....	22
Participants.....	23
Semi-structured interviews	24
Field notes.....	26
Data analysis	27
Confidentiality of Participants	29
Limitations	29
Delimitations.....	29
Trustworthiness.....	30
Researcher Positionality.....	30
Chapter Summary	32
Chapter Four: Findings.....	32
Overview of Findings	33
Description of Participants and Sense of Belonging.....	35
Themes	50
U.S.-born Latinx student themes	51
<i>Theme 1: Instructors as an essential part of belonging.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Theme 2: Feeling of community.....</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Theme 3: Campus climate as part of acceptance</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Theme 4: Valuing students' individuality</i>	<i>57</i>
Foreign-born Latinx student themes	59

<i>Theme 1: Acceptance by peers (student clubs)</i>	59
<i>Theme 2: Feeling of community</i>	61
<i>Theme 3: Adjustment/acclturation in college</i>	62
Lessons Learned.....	65
Foreign-born Latinx student recommendations	66
<i>Lesson 1: Have campus dialogue about undocumented students</i>	66
<i>Lesson 2: Allow students to show their Latinx pride</i>	67
<i>Lesson 3: Intentionally promote a diverse campus community</i>	68
U.S.-born Latinx student recommendations	68
<i>Lesson 1: Acknowledge students’ existing characteristics</i>	68
<i>Lesson 2: Communicate academic expectations up front</i>	69
Chapter Summary	70
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Discussion	71
Problem Statement.....	71
Purpose of the Study	71
Methodology	72
Recapitulation of Findings	73
Findings Related to Previous Research.....	76
Sense of belonging.....	76
Hispanic-serving institution designation.....	77
Acculturative Stress	78
Limitations	78
Implications for Research and Practice.....	79

References	82
Appendix A: Informed Consent	91
Appendix B: Permission to Recruit	94
Appendix C: Demographic Information Survey	95
Appendix D: Foreign-Born Interview Questions	96
Appendix E: U.S-Born Interview Questions	98

List of Tables

Table 1: Participant Demographics.....	24
--	----

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction**Statement of the Problem**

A sense of not belonging may hinder Latinx students' educational attainment because they face unique and varied obstacles and circumstances in the U.S. (Loveland, 2018). Eskay, Onu, Obiyo, Igbo, and Udaya (2012) found that many foreign-born immigrant students felt fortunate to be a part of America's higher education system; however, they also felt unwanted and unaccepted. Foreign-born students recounted instances of educators engaging in discriminatory practices, such as instructors and counselors taunting their accents and the way they dressed. Students recalled episodes of name calling, being ignored in the classroom, and feeling isolated. These obstacles led students to find another more welcoming and understanding institution (Eskay et al., 2012).

The effects of campus racial climates are important to consider when examining sense of belonging. Research shows that when students perceive a campus to be indifferent or hostile toward their culture, their academic and social lives suffer considerably. Museus and Maramba (2011) studied concepts of culture and belonging and found that students who maintained ties with their cultural heritage were associated with experiencing a greater sense of belonging and adjusting more readily to college. It was also noted that congruence between students' homes and campus cultures are positively associated with sense of belonging. Those students who felt pressure to sever ties with their culture and assimilate to the culture of their college campus were negatively impacted, which resulted in a reduced sense of belonging. Similarly, Hurtado

and Carter (1997) noted that hostile climates are negatively associated with sense of belonging among Latinx students.

Despite their designation, Hispanic-serving institutions, or HSIs, vary a great deal in how they view themselves, their curriculum, and in how faculty perceive their responsibility for supporting Latinx success (Santiago, Taylor, & Galdeano, 2016). Differences include leadership's approach to diversity and organizational change, available resources to serve a specific population, ability to balance access and quality, willingness to promote a supportive environment, and overall investment in serving the Latinx population (Santiago, 2006). Because the term HSI was not coined with a mission, many researchers are attempting to define what it really means to be an HSI; however, they are concluding that the designation is idealistic, political, closeted, and not embraced or advertised (Garcia & Taylor, 2017). When students actively identify with an organization, they are more satisfied, experience a greater sense of belonging, and perform better (Garcia & Dwyer, 2018). The researchers also noted that when asked about the HSI designation, students either thought it was a good thing, believed it was an exclusionary term, had multiple viewpoints on the definition, or were indifferent about the designation (Garcia & Dwyer, 2018).

Low educational attainment for both foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx populations remains a concern for many colleges; however, foreign-born Latinx students have not attained the same level of achievement as their U.S.-born Latinx peers. In 2015, data demonstrated that 20% of the U.S.-born Latinx population held a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 12% of the foreign-born Latinx population (Lopez & Patten (2015). Reasons for this disparity may be attributed to lower rates of sense of belonging

and satisfaction among foreign-born students. Stebleton et al. (2010) conducted a quantitative study at a four-year research institution to explore sense of belonging/satisfaction among immigrant and non-immigrant students. The results showed that immigrant students had lower ratings for satisfaction/feelings of belonging than non-immigrant students.

Fostering a sense of belonging on college campuses can help Latinx students overcome barriers to academic achievement and degree completion. There is value in understanding how colleges can instill a greater sense of belonging among their foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students to promote higher rates of persistence and degree completion for both groups.

Theoretical Framework: Acculturation and Acculturative Stress

Since 1960, the Latinx population has grown exponentially from 6.3 million to 56.5 million in 2015, and it is expected to continue growing. Not only has the U.S.-born population increased, but so has the foreign-born population from less than one million in 1960 to 19.4 million in 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2018). The foreign-born Latinx population goes through an adaptation experience known as acculturation following their arrival to the U.S. Acculturation is the process of balancing one's heritage culture with that of the receiving culture, and the number of individuals that go through this process is much larger than reported (Schwartz et al., 2012). Second-generation Latinx individuals, such as those who are U.S.-born but raised by foreign-born parents, often grow up in an environment where they feel connected to their heritage and culture through food, customs, and family vacations; however, they face the challenge of balancing this native culture with the dominant U.S. culture (Schwartz et al., 2013). As a result, they may experience acculturative stress, the negative side effect of trying to assimilate two

competing cultures. Acculturative stress arises in second-generation college students when they are expected to assimilate into an Americanized campus culture (Castillo, Cano, Chen, Blucker, & Olds, 2008).

College students, because they are adults, do not adjust as readily as children to new cultures. According to Kurtz-Costes and Pungello (2000), children adjust more easily to migration than do teenagers or adults because children have less defined cultural identities. Young children do not have a lot of experience with cultures, beliefs, and customs at the point of migration. Older teenagers and adults, on the other hand, are more likely to hold these already embedded cultures and beliefs for longer periods of time. Additionally, contact with the new society upon arrival is necessary for adaptation. For example, adaptation is strongly influenced by living arrangements, school experiences, and attitudes and behaviors of parents. Maintaining their native language and culture while gradually adopting the new language promotes pride in ethnicity and fosters academic success (Kurtz-Costes & Pungello, 2000). Ultimately, the degree of experiencing acculturative stress may vary depending on time and method of migration; therefore, it is important to understand both college-specific stressors as well as acculturative stressors.

The inconsistent feelings of being torn between two cultures can have negative impacts on college students' well-being and lead to suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, and health problems, among other issues (Wang, Schwartz, & Zamboanga, 2010). Crockett et al. (2007) studied the relationship between acculturative stress and psychological functioning among Mexican college students and found that acculturative stress was associated with depression and anxiety. Williams and Berry (1991) also

suggested that acculturative stress leads to negative emotional issues such as depression and anxiety.

Acculturative stress is typically associated with foreign-born, non-English speakers, but it can also occur in individuals who are proficient in English (Wang, Schwartz, & Zamboanga 2010; Crockett et al., 2007). Varying levels of acculturative stress occur depending on the person's level of heritage and the receiving cultural orientation (Wang, Schwartz, & Zamboanga, 2010). Research indicates that bicultural individuals who adopted both their own culture and the culture of the U.S. adjusted far better than those who did not (Wang, Schwartz, & Zamboanga, 2010).

A study conducted by Chun, Marin, Schwartz, Pham, and Castro-Olivo (2016) indicated that there is a direct connection between ethnic identity and low acculturative stress on sense of belonging. When Latinx students experienced less discrimination and felt more connected to their families, cultures of origin, and the people from their college community, they experienced a greater sense of belonging. Similar to research by Crockett et al. (2007), results confirmed the negative effects of acculturative stress among Mexican American students. Parental support and active coping strategies buffered high levels of acculturative stress.

Acculturative stress was chosen as a particular approach for understanding and interpreting the data collected from foreign-born and U.S-born students and serves as merely one type of lens that may influence sense of belonging among Latinx college students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to foreign-born and U.S-born students' sense of belonging and to gain insights into how each subgroup experiences sense of belonging. The second purpose of the study is to document lessons learned about fostering sense of belonging at a community college designated as a Hispanic-serving institution from the perspective of U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinx students. Gaining a better understanding of the factors that contribute to sense of belonging among the two Latinx groups can help community college leaders serving at HSIs provide a more welcoming environment for Latinx students and, as a result, improve retention and completion rates among this population.

Although existing research has established that feelings of not belonging can hinder Latinx students' educational attainment, it has not yet been determined if Latinx foreign-born and U.S.-born students experience sense of belonging in disparate ways. It also has not been determined what contributes to a sense of belonging among this unique subgroup of students. Both U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinx students face obstacles and challenges; however, very few studies disaggregate the various Latinx origin groups. Instead, they are often viewed as one single population making it difficult to isolate their unique experiences for further research (Martinez-Pons & Zimmerman, 1990). Capturing the dissimilarities of each group, such as place of birth or nativity, experiences in their country-of-origin, U.S. settlement patterns, parental factors, and cultural expectations may shed light on how to best serve the Latinx population for practitioners and educators.

This qualitative case study aims to provide detailed accounts of how foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx subgroups differ in describing sense of belonging and what lessons can be learned from those experiences.

Research Questions

This research is guided by the following questions:

- 1) How do foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students differ in describing sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?
- 2) What lessons can be learned from the experiences of foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students in relation to fostering sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?

Definitions and Terms

To effectively communicate the intent of this research, several terms have been identified for clarity. The terms include *Latinx*, *U.S.-born Latinx student*, and *foreign-born Latinx student*.

- Latinx: A gender neutral term in lieu of Latino or Latina.
- Foreign-born Latinx student: Refers to students who are residing in the U.S. but were born in a Spanish-speaking country. These students are not considered international students.
- U.S.-born Latinx students: Students who were born in the U.S. and identify as being Latinx.

Procedures

This qualitative case study was conducted at a two-year, HSI-designated community college in Illinois. The college operates under a model where only students

living in the district can attend the college at an in-district rate. The college's district encompasses 63 square miles and includes 25 towns and villages with 300,000 residents. In 2019, 10,592 students were enrolled at the college, and 42% of these identified as Latinx. Of the 647 instructional faculty, 34 faculty (5%) identify as Hispanic/Latinx. The five-year graduation trend for first-time, full-time Latinx students is 18%. The graduation rates dipped from 14% in 2010 to 11% in 2012 and then climbed to 18% in 2014. The graduation rates have remained steady at 18% from 2014 to 2018. The college graduated approximately 1,000-1,225 students each spring semester from 2014 to 2018 (College Fact Book, 2018).

For this qualitative study, I conducted 15 face-to-face interviews with Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Columbian students. These students had attended the college for at least one semester, so they were familiar with the campus and what it had to offer. I administered a demographic survey to gain information about each student's background and to identify additional factors about their culture, family, and level of college engagement. Lastly, I conducted an observation in the student cafeteria, which is the most popular place on campus for students to socialize outside of class as well as where the college hosts the majority of its student events. I chose to conduct my observation in the cafeteria because of the high volume of student traffic and direct student-to-student interactions. Observations included physical features of the room that may send messages of the campus culture and mission, types of student events and activities held in the cafeteria, layout of the room, types of activities and interactions (i.e., images, posters, events, type of music, students eating, playing the piano, ordering food, or just walking by), and noise level.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to existing knowledge in various ways. First, the gap in literature indicates the need to disaggregate the Latinx population to discontinue the practice of lumping all Latinxs together despite country of origin resulting in generalizations that may not be accurate. Research shows that many differences exist among the Latinx population; therefore, it is only just to value those differences. Second, results of this case study have the potential to benefit a large percentage of Latinx students attending community college HSIs across the U.S. More specifically, the results are intended to inform college leaders about how U.S-born and foreign-born Latinx students view sense of belonging at HSIs and how campuses can better facilitate a learning environment that fosters academic achievement and a more welcoming environment for these students.

Chapter Summary

Fostering a sense of belonging on college campuses can help Latinx students overcome barriers to academic achievement and degree completion. There is value in understanding how colleges can instill a greater sense of belonging among their foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students. This study aims to gain an understanding of the factors that contribute to foreign-born and U.S-born students' sense of belonging and to gain insights into how each subgroup experiences sense of belonging. The results of the study hopes to inform college leaders about how U.S-born and foreign-born Latinx students view sense of belonging at HSIs and how campuses can better facilitate a learning environment that fosters academic achievement and a more welcoming environment for these students.

CHAPTER TWO

The Review of the Literature

This literature review focuses on sense of belonging among Latinx community college students. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to foreign-born and U.S-born students' sense of belonging and to gain insight into the differences among the two different groups of students. This chapter is organized as follows: (a) Viewing Latinx Students as One Population; (b) Sense of Belonging Defined; (c) Sense of Belonging for U.S.-born and Foreign-born Latinx Students; (d) Chapter Summary.

Viewing Latinx Students as One Population

Extensive research has been conducted on sense of belonging among students of color; however, many of these studies use the term “students of color” as a catchall that includes African American, Asian, and Latinx students (Hussain & Jones, 2019; Museus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017; Gummadam, Pittman, & Ioffe, 2016). Further, researchers have historically grouped together the Latinx population despite that Latinx subgroups possess different genetic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Burchard et al., 2005). Distinctions exist within the Latinx community including dialectal variations in the Spanish language. For example, Puerto Ricans may use a different Spanish word than a Costa Rican might, and it may be interpreted differently in each language. Latinx individuals also possess a myriad of social, political, and economic reasons for living in the U.S.

Existing research on sense of belonging treat Latinxs as a single population; however, it is important to acknowledge the different subgroups that live and thrive

within the term Latinx and how they feel and experience sense of belonging. Combining all Latinx subgroups results in assumptions, inaccurate generalizations, and stereotypes about this population (Rodriguez, Parrish, & Parks, 2017). Commonly, college administrators classify Latinx students as one population because they are unaware of subcultural distinctions. By ignoring these nuances, however, colleges risk making these students feel isolated and excluded (Rodriguez, Parrish, & Parks, 2017). Scientists and federal officials also classify Latinx students into one group, thereby ignoring the unique factors that may interfere with each subgroup's academic achievement and that may contribute to the low success rates of past efforts to remediate underachievement in Latinxs (Martinez-Pons & Zimmerman, 1990). Although some research studies group Latinxs together as a way to emphasize the commonalities of a diverse community (Parker, Horowitz-Menace, Morin, & Lopez, 2015) or as a way to describe how Latinxs share a common cultural heritage and language (Burchard et al., 2005), it is a convenient and common belief that Latinxs are all the same (Rodriguez, Parrish, & Parks, 2017).

Sense of Belonging Defined

Sense of belonging is defined, at the most basic level, as whether or not students feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, and included, as well as whether they feel that they matter in the classroom, at college, or in their chosen career path (Strayhorn, 2019). Sense of belonging captures an individual's view of whether they feel included and connected to the campus community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Additionally, sense of belonging is illustrated by the mutual responsibility between the institution and the individual (Johnson et al., 2007; Rendon, 2000). Studying sense of belonging allows researchers to assess which forms of academic and social factors enhance a student's

connection and shared identity with their college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). The following literature review outlines what researchers are saying in the field about sense of belonging among Latinx students and, specifically, U.S.-born and foreign-born and Latinx students.

Sense of Belonging among U.S.-born and Foreign-born Latinx Students

It is important to note the sense of belonging literature specific to the population in question. Latinx students who are also commuter students tend to adjust differently than non-Latinx and non-commuter students. Adding the foreign-born characteristics are also crucial to examine. The following paragraphs outline literature relating to commuter students; discrimination, bias, and cultural engagement; persistence, graduation, depression, and anxiety.

Commuter students.

A study conducted by Holloway-Friesen (2018) on commuter students' sense of belonging found that commuter students have a different process of adjusting. This type of student typically has life responsibilities to tend to such as increased travel time to campus, long work hours, and family obligations. They are also typically students of color (Holloway-Friesen, 2018). Considering these characteristics, commuter students are less likely to be involved and connected to the campus. Holloway-Friesen's (2018) qualitative study found warm and caring faculty interactions were critical to instill a sense of belonging in these students. Additionally, Holloway-Friesen discovered that commuter students' difficulty making connections with peers on campus made them feel isolated and pressured to conform which, in turn, hindered their sense of belonging.

Discrimination, bias, and cultural engagement.

Several researchers found that discrimination and bias on college campuses contributed to diminished sense of belonging for students of color (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hussain & Jones, 2019). On the other hand, Latinx students felt an increased sense of belonging when they perceived a supportive racial climate on campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). It was noted that culturally engaging environments are salient predictors of belonging for both White students and students of color (Maseus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017). Hurtado and Carter (1997) measured Latinxs' sense of belonging by looking at their attachment to the college and their level of participation in campus activities. The researchers found that commitment to social-community organizations was the most significant factor related to sense of belonging. In contrast, participants who were engaged in a program or activity that involved helping Spanish speaking students learn English felt that this was the institution's way of separating minorities from the majority student population, and this made Latinxs feel alienated and uncomfortable (Rodriguez, Parrish, & Parks, 2017). Participants felt that the college underscored students' differences and isolated Latinxs from other students by hosting minority-focused events.

Other researchers, such as Johnson et al. (2007), found that students from all racial/ethnic groups felt socially supported in the residence halls, which contributed greatly to sense of belonging. Maestas, Vasquera, and Zehr (2007) also researched sense of belonging at HSIs and found that demonstrating positive attitudes toward diversity and supporting affirmative action goals on behalf of the institution made a positive influence on students' sense of belonging.

For students of color, positive social interactions with diverse peers outside the classroom contributed to a higher sense of belonging on campus. Increased engagement and social interactions with their peers were viewed as a protective factor against high levels of discrimination (Hussain & Jones, 2019). Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, and Plum (2004) found that when Latinx students attended an HSI with other like-peers who experienced the same pressures, they felt a greater sense of belonging and increased academic achievement. Garcia (2019) explored the role of involvement in a Latinx sorority and fraternity and how students developed and made meaning of their sense of belonging in predominately White institutions. Garcia's student population identified themselves as Mexican, Mexican-American, Hispanic, or Latino/a. Garcia's research concluded that when Latinx students engaged in smaller campus subcultures or subcommunities, such as a fraternity or sorority, they felt like they belonged to the larger university. The students would not have felt a sense of belonging at their university without being involved in their sorority or fraternity or another subcommunity first. Similar to the work of Maestas, Vasquera, and Zehr (2007), students felt a greater sense of belonging when students participated in Greek life and held campus leadership positions.

The sense of belonging literature has established the importance of community to Latinx college students. Latinxs experience a greater sense of belonging when a strong community is built among diverse peers and when a connection is established within an educational institution (Maestas, Vasquera, & Zehr, 2007; Garcia, 2019; Gonzales-Vasquez, Martinez, & Plum, 2004; Hussain & Jones, 2019; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Latinx students need to feel genuinely cared for and supported in their community.

Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, and Plum (2004) found that students felt a greater sense of belonging when they had strong relationships with faculty and staff. For example, students reported that interacting with Latinx faculty and staff strongly impacted their motivation to succeed in college. Students became motivated when they saw Latinx professors who grew up in the same neighborhoods as they did but were able to achieve a doctoral degree despite sharing similar struggles. Concepts found in the literature agree that when Latinx students develop strong relationships with faculty and staff who possess the same backgrounds, they experience a greater sense of belonging (Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, & Plum, 2004; Maestas, Vasquera, & Zehr, 2007).

Persistence, retention, and graduation.

The literature indicates that feelings of not belonging contributes to low persistence, low graduation rates, depression, and anxiety among Latinx college students (Hurtado & Carter 1997; Loveland, 2018; Eskay et al., 2012). The stronger a student's sense of belonging in college, the greater the chances that they will succeed.

General trends in higher education indicated that minority students tend to have the lowest persistence and graduation rates and preparedness rates when compared to their white counterparts (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). Latinx students are usually first in their family to attend college, are more likely to start college underprepared, are in need of financial assistance, and juggle full-time jobs and families (Greene, Marti, & McClenney, 2008). The overall persistence rate for Latinx students attending a two-year Hispanic-serving institution is 58% and the completion rate is 34% (Santiago, Taylor, & Galdeano, 2016). Nationally, only 15.4% of Hispanic males earn a degree or certificate or

transfer from a community college to a four-year institution within a three-year time frame (Wood, Vasquez Urias, & Harris, 2016).

Foreign-born students have the highest high school and college dropout rates and lower bachelor degree attainment rates than their U.S.-born peers (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Lee, Ransom, & College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2011). Lee et al. (2011) noted that foreign-born Mexican students had a 38.8% high school dropout rate, whereas U.S.-born Mexican students had a 12.1% dropout rate. Also, Puerto Rican foreign-born students had a high school dropout rate of 23.0% and U.S.-born Puerto Rican students had a 12.8% dropout rate. According to Wojtkiewicz and Donato (1995), of all Latinx subgroups, Mexican and Puerto Rican students had the lowest high school graduation rates.

Wojtkiewicz and Donato (1995) found that U.S.-born Mexican students with U.S.-born parents were less likely to graduate from high school than U.S.-born Mexican students with foreign-born parents. According to Ryan, Bauman, and the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), 20% of U.S.-born Latinxs held a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 12% of foreign-born Latinxs in 2015. Wojtkiewicz and Donato (1995) acknowledged that parental factors are one reason many foreign-born students outperform U.S.-born Latinxs. Immigrant parents may pass on higher levels of motivation to their children than native U.S.-born parents. The research literature from Martinez-Pons and Zimmerman (1990) looked at the differences in home educational processes and academic achievement among Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central/South Americans in the U.S. The authors confirmed that parental background was correlated with academic achievement. The results indicated that paternal achievement processes played a more significant role than

maternal processes in the academic achievement of the three Latinx origin groups (Martinez-Pons & Zimmerman, 1990). When comparing Latinx groups, the Cuban fathers placed more emphasis on learning English, being independent, and educational aspirations than the Puerto Ricans and Central/South American fathers.

Country of origin.

The effects of nativity on low educational attainment differ among Latinx groups. For example, Puerto Rican and Mexican foreign-born students differ in that Mexican students often enter the U.S. undocumented while Puerto Rican students are U.S. citizens by birth and can enter the U.S. as they please (Wojtkiewicz & Donato, 1995).

Undocumented Mexican students lack educational opportunities due to their undocumented immigration status. Undocumented students cannot participate in the Title IV Higher Education Act, which provides U.S. citizens with federal financial aid such as Pell grants, scholarships, loans, or in-state tuition (Salinas, Malavé, Torrens, & Swingle, 2019). While Title IV does not prohibit undocumented students from enrolling in higher education institutions, it does prohibit them from receiving financial assistance, which results in higher expense for these undocumented students (Enyioha, 2019). Financial obstacles continue to plague undocumented, foreign-born students as they fight as they struggle to find the monetary support necessary to maintain their educational aspirations.

Foreign-born students who are non-citizens or undocumented also have to deal with the charged political landscape in gaining U.S. citizenship status (Loveland, 2018). Although students living in the U.S. are undocumented, many of them were brought to the U.S. by their parents and received most of their K-12 education in the U.S. These students share many similarities with other students born in the U.S. despite their

undocumented status. They think of the U.S. as their country, speak both English and Spanish, and often don't know they are undocumented until they are of age to apply for a driver's license (Kim, 2013).

The uncertainty of today's political landscape has left undocumented college students worried about their future and their college aspirations. The Dream Act and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program allowed students to obtain a social security number, driver's license, work, and relief from deportation, as well as established a sense of belonging among undocumented students (Muñoz, Vigil, Jach, & Rodriguez-Gutierrez, 2018).

Undocumented students have reported experiencing stigma, anti-immigration stereotypes, and racism. Salinas et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study that found undocumented students were subjected to jokes about contacting immigration or name calling. Students also recounted times when people would drive around their neighborhoods targeting individuals who were Hispanic. Although these experiences were painful, they made the students more aware of their surroundings and taught them to demonstrate resilience.

Lastly, Stebleton et al. (2010) found that foreign-born Latinx college students' sense of belonging is significantly lower than their U.S.-born peers. Foreign-born students who recently immigrated to the U.S. (as a child, teenager, or young adult) or are children of parents born outside the U.S. experienced lower levels of belonging compared to their U.S.-born peers. One reason for this disparity may be that foreign-born Latinx students face more barriers than U.S.-born Latinx students in pursuing higher education. Erisman and Looney (2007) found that foreign-born students faced barriers gaining

access to higher education and completing degrees. These barriers included lack of information about higher education, work and family responsibilities, financial need, lack of academic preparation and achievement, and limited English proficiency.

Chapter Summary

Trends in educational attainment vary among Latinx groups depending on their place of nativity. The foreign-born Latinx population tends to have a lower educational attainment rate than the U.S.-born population. In the high school context, drop-out rates also tend to be higher for the foreign-born population. Individuals with foreign-born parents attain higher levels of education compared to those with U.S.-born Hispanic parents. Although it has been established that the foreign-born population performs worse than the U.S.-born population, it has not yet been determined what contributes to the academic resiliency of each Latinx subgroup.

Lastly, we understand that a sense of not belonging can hinder the educational attainment of Latinx students; however, the literature has not examined the relationship between the sense of belonging and country of origin and how that sense of belonging differs and how it manifests among each subgroup. In addition, capturing the dissimilarities of each origin group such as place of nativity, experiences in the country of origin, U.S. settlement patterns, parental factors, and cultural expectation may shed light on how to best serve the Latinx population for practitioners and educators.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to foreign-born and U.S.-born students' sense of belonging and to gain insights into how each subgroup experiences sense of belonging. The second purpose of the study was to document lessons learned about fostering sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college from the perspective of U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinx students. The research questions are as follows:

- 1) How do foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students differ in describing sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?
- 2) What lessons can be learned from the experiences of U.S.-born and Foreign-born Latinx students in relation to fostering sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?

This chapter is organized as follows: (a) Methodology: Overview of the Research Design; (b) Methods: Data Collection and Data Analysis; (c) Confidentiality of Participants; (d) Limitations; (e) Delimitations; (f) Trustworthiness; (g) Researcher Positionality; (h) Chapter Summary.

Methodology: Overview of the Research Design

This qualitative study aimed to obtain rich, credible, and accurate data that truly reflected the views and experiences of the Latinx study participants. A qualitative research method was used because it values individual voices and highlights those that have been historically marginalized (Perl & Noldon, 2000).

A case study approach enabled participants to narrate their experiences and, in their own words, express their cultural diversity and uniqueness. The case study approach

allows for a descriptive, exploratory design that analyzes a person, group event, policy, project, decision, or institution. It is most effective when research questions aim to explain a certain circumstance (Creswell, 2014). This approach provided the researcher an opportunity to develop an in-depth analysis of a case, program, event, activity, process, or of one or more individuals (Creswell, 2014). It is more relevant when the research questions seek to answer the how or why and the questions require an in-depth answer of some phenomenon (Yin, 2018).

Using a quantitative approach in this study would have minimized participants' true experiences and perspectives related to issues in education. A randomly distributed survey would have yielded only generalizations and assumptions about the Latinx population and how they experience sense of belonging (Perl & Nolden, 2000). Inaccurate generalizations are what this study is trying to avoid. Capturing and analyzing students' actual voices will reveal unique stories and multiple perspectives.

Methods: Data Collection and Data Analysis

The study occurred at a two-year community college located in the west suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. The college is designated a Hispanic-serving institution by the U.S. Department of Education and is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Currently, the college serves over 10,000 students and offers more than 100 degree and certificate programs. The college serves a high proportion of low income (53%), first generation (81%) college students, as well as a high number of adults returning to college who may be unemployed or underemployed. [The college's student body is 59% minority] and, 40% of students are Latinx (College Fact Book, 2018). The college is considered a commuter campus because it enrolls nontraditional students who do not live

on campus, attend school part time, and have other off-campus responsibilities such as jobs or dependents (Ortman, 1995). Many commuter students do not have time to develop relationships with others outside of the classroom, and the relationships they do make are limited by the amount of time they spend in class. It is important to note the literature acknowledges that establishing a sense of belonging is more difficult for commuter students given their unique circumstances (Ortman, 1995).

Institutional review board approval was obtained from the college's division of institutional effectiveness. A letter of approval was obtained by the executive director to conduct the study.

Recruitment.

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 15 individuals best suited to respond to the research problem under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As this research study aimed to illuminate the experiences of foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students, participants had to meet the following criteria: a) currently attending an HSI-designated community college; b) identify as Latinx c) identify as either foreign-born or U.S.-born, and d) attended an HSI-designated community college for at least one semester.

Participants were recruited via classroom presentations from Spanish, environmental science, psychology, machine design, welding, and electrical codes and standards undergraduate classes. I visited both morning and evening sessions to obtain a sample of different age groups and types of students. I provided a brief five-minute speech on the purpose of the study and distributed a copy of the informed consent, which is a summary of the project, and my business card. To avoid racial profiling, I informed students that if they did not identify as Latinx, they could distribute the informed consent

to friends who identified as Latinx. I instructed students to email or text me after the presentation if they were interested in participating in the study. A total of 15 students volunteered to participate. Five of the participants were foreign-born and identified as Mexican and Columbian. Ten participants were U.S.-born students and identified as Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Puerto Rican/Guatemalan. Originally, I aimed to recruit 12 participants; however, additional students came forward who I did not want to turn away. I also aimed to recruit only Mexican and Puerto Rican students; however, various Colombian foreign-born students came forward, and I determined that adding this subgroup would not change the scope of the study. Table 1 provides demographic information for the 15 participants.

Participants.

Students were asked to complete a demographic survey that contained 16 questions. The data collected in the demographic survey included information about the students' background such as ethnicity, nativity, grade point average (GPA), cultural activities, employment status, age, course schedule, languages spoken, familial obligations, involvement on campus, and family background. Information obtained from the demographic survey was used to examine factors that may or may not contribute to the students' sense of belonging and to distinguish between participants. Additionally, information was collected about each participant's ethnicity and background to individualize and value their unique stories and cultures.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Semester in College	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Birth Country
Janessa	4	19	Mexican	U.S.
Adan	4	20	Mexican	U.S.
Dunkan	3	19	Mexican	U.S.
Jade	1	18	Puerto Rican/Guatemalan	U.S.
Lydia	1	50	Puerto Rican	U.S.
Sol	4	20	Mexican	Mexico
Miguel	2	18	Mexican	U.S.
Daniel	1	39	Puerto Rican	U.S.
Ricardo	4	30	Mexican	U.S.
Andres	4	19	Mexican	U.S.
Izzy	4	19	Puerto Rican	U.S.
Maya	3	20	Mexican	Mexico
Lu	2	19	Colombian	Columbia
Kelly	3	22	Colombian	Columbia
Alejandra	2	19	Colombian	Columbia

Semi-structured interviews.

The interview protocol was the main source of data for addressing the two research questions:

- 1) How do foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students differ in describing sense of belonging at a HSI-designated community college campus?
- 2) What lessons can be learned from the experiences of Latinx students in relation to fostering sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?

Examples of questions from the interview protocol include the following:

- Describe a time(s) when you felt welcome at this college.
- How do you define sense of belonging?
- If any, describe a time when you didn't feel welcome at this college?

The final protocol can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E.

Qualitative data were collected via 15 semi-structured interviews with Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Colombian students at an HSI-designated community. Interviews served as a powerful mechanism through which to capture the uniqueness and accuracy of participants' educational experiences. Semi-structured interviews enabled students to freely and directly express their perspectives, which provided a depth of content not possible through a more structured format (Perl & Nolden, 2000). Additionally, the two-way communication of a semi-structured format enabled me to observe, ask clarifying questions, and then make sense out of those observations (Jacelon & O'Dell, 2005a). Two sets of questions were developed ahead of time to differentiate the experiences of the foreign-born population and the U.S.-born population. The foreign-born student interviews included additional questions about their experiences moving to the U.S. I posed these additional questions during the interviews to elicit more thorough responses and to gain a clearer understanding of students' acculturation experiences. The additional questions were not considered new; rather, they were treated as follow-up questions and, as such, are not included in the appendix.

The interviews took place face-to-face in my office and in their instructor's offices if they were in close proximity to the students' classrooms. These interviews were conducted between November 25, 2019 and February 7, 2020. An audio recorder was

used during the interview for recording and transcribing purposes. Students were informed that only the researcher would have access to the recordings.

To convey authenticity as a researcher and to elicit open responses, I validated my ethnic and cultural background by matching mine to theirs. I shared my background as a Latinx woman in relation to where I grew up, and the challenges I faced in education, with the English language, and in my community. Sharing these experiences allowed me to develop an affinity with the participants. Affinity is developed through personal interactions that naturally emerge in a sensitive and caring environment and that result in feelings of belongingness. In this type of environment, participants more readily share their own stories and are reassured that they will not be misunderstood (Vasquez-Montilla, Reyes-Blanes, Hyun, & Brovelli, 2000).

Field notes.

A qualitative observation took place in the college's cafeteria, the campus' main area of socialization. I observed as a nonparticipant and took field notes (Creswell, 2014). In this role, I acted as an outsider and watched and recorded from a distance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The field notes were handwritten. This type of observation allowed me to capture unusual aspects of the room including the type of music played, room layout and décor that is usually missed or not paid attention to as students walk by.

I chose to conduct observations in the cafeteria because it is centrally located and frequented by large numbers of students. When the observation took place, the weather was 20-30 degrees Fahrenheit and snowy, and though there are areas for students to congregate outside of the building, they typically remain inside. The purpose for the observation was to identify any images, events, activities, and features of the physical

setting that may elicit hunches or reactions that contribute to sense of belonging or feelings of comfort for the population being studied.

The observation occurred on several occasions in the last few weeks of the fall 2019 semester and first two weeks of the spring 2020 semester. During the observation, I recorded personal reflections, insights, ideas, confusions, and initial interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis.

Once the interviews concluded, I organized the data and prepared it for analysis. I transcribed the interviews and field notes, and combined data from the demographic surveys into two large charts. One chart included school data provided by students in the demographic survey and the second chart included personal information that participants self-reported. My first level of data analysis included reading the interview transcriptions and making notes in the margins on my initial thoughts and ideas. Some of my questions included the following: Where does the data overlap? Where is it different? What are the issues barriers, motivation, and incentives students are talking about? I color coded recurring ideas and themes as well as ideas that stood alone. This first level of analysis provided a general sense of the information and allowed me time to reflect on its overall meaning (Creswell, 2014). The second level of analysis included coding the data, which involved chunking the data into categories and assigning each category a representative word(s) (Creswell, 2014). These codes were not pre-developed; rather, I created inductive codes based on the information collected from participants (Creswell, 2014). I developed these codes based on responses that related directly to the research questions as well as on information that emerged as a result of the semi-structured interview format but that

was still tangentially related to the questions. Some of the information students provided was not related to the research questions, so that information needed to be filtered. I pushed some of this data to the side in case it resurfaced later, and other data I simply discarded (Wolcott, 1994). I categorized the codes based on participants' U.S.-born or foreign-born status. I also categorized codes based on individual subgroups and also analyzed for connections within participants (Creswell, 2014). Codes were developed until no new codes surfaced. Approximately 38 codes emerged and a codebook was created. The codebook contained names for each code, a description of each code defining boundaries, and examples for each code using participant quotes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Once the data were fully converted into codes, I organized the codes into themes for interpretation. Seeing all the data from a particular code was very important for relating it to the other like data (Jacelon & O'Dell, 2005a). This process involved searching for hidden meaning and revealing what was not obvious. Interpretation of codes was based on my perspective as the researcher of this study and on information gleaned from the literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Detailed descriptions were developed *in situ* to ensure interpretations accounted for the contextual nature of the observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From the 12 codes generated for the U.S.-born population, five thematic ideas emerged (see Appendix F). For the foreign-born population, 8 codes were generated and 3 thematic ideas emerged. The themes that emerged appeared as major findings as well as headers in Chapter Four (Creswell, 2014). Once this occurred, the data were deemed saturated (Jacelon & O'Dell, 2005b).

Confidentiality of Participants

Confidentiality is the duty to protect the privacy rights of individuals and groups participating in a research study (Colosi, Costache, & Colosi, 2019). Confidentiality allows for an individual's information to be disclosed in an approved context. For this study, each student that I interviewed was provided the opportunity to choose a pseudonym that only they or I as the researcher could identify. Participants were informed that their pseudonym would appear in the study along with their demographics. Audio recordings were used and kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. Participants' demographic information and real name was also kept in a locked cabinet that only I as the researcher had access to.

Limitations

There are two major limitations present in this study. First, participants who were first-semester students and who had not yet completed the full semester did not have full exposure to all aspects of the college. For example, these participants did not have experience with an instructor for a full term, had not walked over to the main campus where students typically congregate and eat, and had not yet engaged with campus resources. This limited the students' ability to articulate certain aspects of their experience. The second limitation was the sample size of the foreign-born population. Five participants identified as foreign-born, and each of these participants had a very unique story. As such, it was challenging to identify vivid themes.

Delimitations

My aim was to understand sense of belonging for a specific population at a specific college. The population boundaries included studying U.S.-born Latinx and

foreign-born Latinx students attending an HSI-designated two-year community college. Students from other ethnic backgrounds or types of colleges were excluded from the study. As such, the results may not be applicable to other types of campuses or other types of populations.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure rigorous data collection and analysis, I used member checking to seek feedback from study participants. This method is used to confirm that a researcher's interpretations of study participants' experiences are accurate (Jacelon & O'Dell, 2005a). All 15 participants were emailed a copy of the emerging themes and major findings. Participants were invited to change or modify the content as they saw fit. This process provided an opportunity for me to follow-up with participants and comment on the findings (Creswell, 2014). All 15 participants responded with either minor or no changes.

Reflexivity was used as a way to clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study (Creswell, 2014). Reflexivity emerges in two parts. The first part includes the researcher describing experiences with the phenomenon explored including personal experiences, schooling and background. The second part is discussing how past experiences have shaped the researcher's interpretation of the research being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These experiences are outlined in the Researcher Positionality section.

Researcher Positionality

I approached this research acknowledging my personal interest in the research population because I identify as a U.S-born Mexican student in higher education. I am a first-generation college student who attended a community college that was designated as a Hispanic-serving institution. The community college I attended bordered Nogales,

Sonora Mexico. I am also a first-generation high school graduate on both my maternal and paternal sides. My mother, father, and older sister were born in Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. in 1973. My twin sister and I were born in the U.S. My family initially moved to a primarily Latinx and immigrant neighborhood in California and from birth to the age of 18, I lived in a primarily Latinx area on the southern part of the Arizona Mexico border. I grew up in a family that speaks mostly Spanish in the home. Although we lived in Arizona, my family and I frequented Mexico every weekend up until I was 18 years of age.

Growing up 40 minutes from the U.S. Mexico border and visiting relatives every weekend shaped how I see the world. As far back as I can remember, there has always been a wall separating the Arizona Mexico border. I was accustomed to going through immigration checkpoints and being “looked at” suspiciously, the assumption being I may be undocumented. I was accustomed to having a drug sniffing dog around our car as soon as we crossed the border. These experiences were not out of the ordinary for me growing up, it was just part of what we did to cross the U.S. Mexico border. At an early age, my parents told me that when you see a border patrol agent, you just look at them and say “U.S. citizen,” and they will let you cross. Today, this certainly isn’t the case.

Although I have never felt directly marginalized for being Latinx, instances of racial discrimination against my own race has shaped what I believe in and feel. I lived through tensions that arose in Arizona during the period in which Sheriff Joe Arpaio was racially profiling Latinxs during unwarranted traffic stops and reporting them to the immigration authorities despite their legal status as U.S. citizens. The Sheriff would also purposely raid Latinx grocery stores to arrest Latinxs (Kauffman, 2016). He was also

accused of housing inmates in outdoor tents in 120-degree weather and making them eat discolored meat. Even though I did not experience these events personally, my friends, family, and colleagues were victims of this type of profiling. This caused many people to flee Arizona. These instances of discrimination impact my research. I feel an obligation to advocate for the Latinx population, and I feel that I can best do this by giving them a voice in higher education.

The interpretive framework that resonates with me as a researcher is Social Constructivism in which the focus is on understanding the world in which people live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This worldview relies heavily on the participants' view of the situation. These views have meaning that are not solely based on one individual account; rather, these views are constructed by interactions with others as well as historical and cultural norms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is the reason why I chose to interview participants.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three summarized the qualitative case study methodology used for this research study. Semi-structured interviews were used as a main source of data for addressing the two research questions. Participants were asked to complete a demographic survey, which was used to identify factors that may or may not contribute to their sense of belonging and to distinguish between participants. Field notes were also recorded as part of a qualitative observation in which the researcher observed as a nonparticipant. Limitations and delimitations were described, and the chapter concluded with the researcher's positionality and how that impacts her research.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Chapter Four presents the data collected from the interviews, field notes, and demographic survey. The primary purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to foreign-born and U.S-born students' sense of belonging and to gain insights into the differences among these two subgroups of students. A secondary purpose of the study is to document and share lessons learned about how to foster a sense of belonging among Latinx subgroups at an HSI-designated community college.

Chapter Four is organized as follows: (a) Overview of Findings; (b) Description of Participants and Sense of Belonging; (c) Four Thematic Ideas for U.S.-born Latinx Students; (d) Three Thematic Ideas for Foreign-born Latinx Students; (e) Lessons Learned: U.S-born Latinx Students; (f) Lessons Learned: Foreign-born Latinx Students; (g) Chapter Summary.

Overview of Findings

To fully understand the findings, participants need to be understood in relation to their educational and personal backgrounds, their involvement in college, and how they describe sense of belonging. During the interview process, participants were asked to describe times when they felt like they belonged at the college and times when they did not. The foreign-born population was asked to answer an additional question about their arrival to the U.S., their adjustment process, and how that process contributed to their sense of belonging or not belonging. As discussed in Chapter One, foreign-born students may experience the symptoms of acculturative stress, which may contribute to their sense

of belonging; therefore, it was important to collect information about their adjustment process.

Description of Participants and Sense of Belonging

This section describes the participants and how they described sense of belonging. The sample size included 15 individuals. Six of the participants were U.S.-born Mexicans, three were Puerto Rican, and one was Puerto Rican/Guatemalan. Five participants were foreign-born, two of which were born in Mexico and three of which were born in Colombia. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 50.

Janessa

Janessa is a 19-year-old community college student who identifies as a Mexican female born in the United States. She works part time and typically takes classes in the morning to accommodate her evening work schedule. She is involved in several student activities on campus, which includes working in the transfer center as a work-study student. She is also engaged in a mentoring program for minority students and is a part of the college's domestic violence prevention project. She is paid for the domestic violence project and provides feedback to college administrators on their sexual prevention student programming. Janessa is a first-generation college student, speaks Spanish, maintains a 3.4 GPA, and has attended this community college for four semesters.

Janessa feels an overall sense of belonging at this college. Janessa reflected on her sense of belonging in high school, at a four-year university, and at her current community college. Janessa started by sharing a time in high school when she didn't feel welcome:

When I was in high school, I felt welcome because all the students were Hispanic, but teachers made me feel unwelcome. When teachers banned certain things, I felt

like I didn't belong. We were banned from speaking Spanish and we were given detention for doing so. The teachers felt like we were talking bad about them. We were also banned from wearing certain colors, which I get because of gangs, but they assumed right away that because we were Hispanic, we were in gangs.

(Interview, November 25, 2019.)

Janessa was previously enrolled in a four-year university two hours away from home and lived in the dorms. She felt like she did not belong because she was so far away from her family. She did not have any motivation to attend classes and she would frequently wake up late and miss class. She had many friends and was active in school, but she never felt like going to class. After receiving a low GPA her first semester, she moved closer to her parents and enrolled in an HSI-designated community college closer to home. When Janessa first arrived on campus, she felt like the "registration process, advising, and finding information" was fairly easy. After enrolling, Janessa shared that she feels like she belongs now: "I generally always feel welcome here because there are a lot of Hispanic students. I am involved in several student activities and I am always busy on campus doing things" (Interview, November 25, 2019). Janessa could not think of a time when she did not feel welcome at this college.

Adan

Adan is a 20-year-old community college student who identifies as a Mexican male born in the United States. Adan works part time and takes classes in the morning and in the evening. Adan is a first-generation college student, speaks Spanish, maintains a GPA of 3.0, is involved in the accounting club, and has attended this community college for four semesters.

Adan feels like he belongs here at the college because he can connect with students who share a background similar to his: “I relate to other students because we don’t have big incomes and we all come from similar family backgrounds. You know some students are undocumented or come from families that are undocumented” (Interview, December 4, 2019). Adan also shared that he feels like he belongs here because he connects with instructors: “There are instructors that are Hispanic or Black, and for some reason they always pay attention to me. It’s like when we share the same ethnicity, they pay more attention to you” (Interview, December 4, 2019). Adan could not share a time or instance when he did not feel like he belonged at this college.

Dunkan

Dunkan is a 19-year-old community college student who identifies as a Mexican male born in the United States. He is not currently employed and is not involved in any clubs or organizations at the college. He is a first-generation college student, speaks Spanish, maintains a 2.8 GPA, and has attended this community college for three semesters.

Overall, Dunkan feels a sense of belonging at this college; however, he expressed a time when he did not feel like he belonged. When he first enrolled, he was very scared because he was a first-generation college student. He shared his feelings about his overall sense of belonging on campus:

Now I am here, but it is still very stressful. I have cousins who are attending a four-year university. They are going to Spain and doing all these things. I feel like the black sheep because I go to a community college, and colleges are not

begging me to go or throwing scholarships at me. So. It's very stressful.

(Interview, December 4, 2019).

Duncan described a time when he did not feel like he belonged at this college:

I had a bad experience because of my skill level in the classroom. Do I feel accepted? Yes. Cared for? No. A professor didn't care for me. It was my developmental English class. I couldn't keep up. She was tough. We couldn't speak in class; she would shut us down and kick us out of the classroom. I didn't end up passing the class. This is really personal. Still today it hits me hard. She said, "Maybe you're not ready for college. Maybe you're not cut out for this."

That is the most crushing experience I've ever had. It was the most hurtful thing anyone has ever said to me in the past five years. (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

Duncan also spoke of times when he felt like he belonged. For example, Duncan shared that he can relate to non-academic employees at the college.

Whenever I go to the cafeteria, I know I can talk the workers there. They speak Spanish like my parents do at home. It reminds me of when my mom tries to cheer me up in Spanish. (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

Duncan feels he connects well with instructors in the classroom as well, which contributes to his sense of belonging: "The thing about race has never come up. I usually connect with instructors because they are nice and want to help me" (Interview, December 4, 2019).

Jade

Jade is an 18-year old community college student who identifies as a Puerto Rican and Guatemalan female born in the United States. Jade is employed part time and takes

classes in the evening to accommodate her work schedule. She is not involved in any clubs or organizations at this college. She is a first-generation college student, does not speak Spanish, maintains a 2.5 GPA, and has attended this college for one semester.

Jade recounted times when she felt like she did not belong. When Jade first arrived on this campus, she was confused and didn't know what to expect. She did not attend an orientation and nobody explained anything to her about her classes. Jade shared her first experience at this college:

There was a lot of differences between high school and college. I felt unwelcomed when I didn't understand the curriculum. Not understanding how college is different from high school is hard. After one semester I am still trying to figure it out. It's still hard. My first day I was lost. I didn't know where my class was at. I went to the Library and asked but I still got lost. I was lost in the building and I didn't see a lot of Hispanics. I didn't think I had to sign in for classes, but I did. (Interview, December 12, 2019.)

Jade also discussed the student population and how sometimes they can be hurtful:

It's hurtful when other people don't know that Puerto Rico is part of the U.S. and they say "go back to your country." They treat me like I am illegal, but I am not because Puerto Rico is part of the U.S." (Interview, December 12, 2019.)

Lydia

Lydia is a 50-year-old community college student who identifies as a Puerto Rican female born in the United States. Lydia is employed full time and is not involved in any clubs or organizations at this college. She is a first-generation college student,

speaks Spanish, maintains a 3.2 GPA, has adult children, and has attended this college for one semester.

Lydia overall feels a general sense of belonging. She described her first semester in college as an older adult with two adult children. She recalls a time when she first arrived on campus to her nursing orientation: “I was given step-by-step information and materials. It was helpful. I was told what to do for pre-reqs and they gave us sandwiches. I was really motivated and I felt like I belonged here” (Interview, December 13, 2019). She felt like this was a good feeling for her because she says that Puerto Ricans give up easily. Lydia went on to state, “Us Puerto Ricans think we can’t do anything that other people can. We give up on our dreams. When you don’t have good people around, you settle for less.”

After attending her orientation, Lydia started her first semester in college. She shared a time when her first writing assignment was due and she visited the library:

The tutor was young and he was always on his phone and didn’t help. He didn’t know that I was a 50-year-old. I’d never used a computer before and didn’t know where to start. I ended up spending five hours at the library trying to figure stuff out. (Interview, December 13, 2019.)

Sol

Sol is a 20-year-old community college student who identifies as a Mexican female born in Mexico. Sol is employed part time and takes classes in the morning. She is involved in a Latinx leadership club, a club for advanced students, and is a member of the sexual violence prevention project. She is a first-generation college student, maintains a 4.0 GPA, speaks Spanish, and has attended this college for four semesters.

Sol did not feel a sense of belonging at the college despite being very involved on campus and holding student leadership positions. She shared her experience being a club leader at the college:

As a club leader, I felt that the campus did not have an interest in the students.

During the Sanctuary Campus ordeal, we were unable to post images of solidarity or print anything. We couldn't put up tables with flyers and we couldn't do a silent protest. I asked if we could put a monarch butterfly on the RISE act flyer and they said we were not allowed to. I was told that the college executives were not on board with any of this. We are a Hispanic-serving institution, but you wouldn't even know it. You can't even tell. (Interview, January 21, 2020.)

Sol is very open about being undocumented. She feels that instructors and administrators are afraid to talk about the subject of undocumented students: "Many people tip toe around the word—it's like they are more afraid to talk about undocumented than I am" (Interview, January 21, 2020). She shared that the campus is not "undocufriendly" and doesn't feel like a Hispanic-serving institution:

The college doesn't do as much as they can to make this a Hispanic-serving campus. When I bring my mom to campus, there is nobody she can talk to because there are no Spanish speaking employees. I have to translate. They have no Latinx instructors either. The school doesn't have any documents translated in Spanish either. (Interview, January 21, 2020.)

Miguel

Miguel is an 18-year-old community college student who identifies as a Mexican male born in the United States. Miguel is not employed and takes classes in the evening.

He is not involved in any student clubs or organizations. He is not considered a first-generation college student, maintains a 3.2 GPA, speaks Spanish, and has attended this college for two semesters.

Miguel has had a very positive experience at the college and stated he feels like he belongs. Miguel typically attends classes on the campus across the street, which is not considered the main campus and typically houses the vocational programs that enroll mostly male students. Miguel shared his experience of the first day of school: “My first day of class I walked in and there were a lot of Mexican students. We had a lot and common and we were the same. We shared similar backgrounds and bonded right away” (Interview, January 21, 2020).

Miguel does not recall a time when he did not feel like he belonged. Miguel started college while he was still in high school through dual credit classes.

I started in high school taking a dual credit class in welding. I think the teachers are easy to talk with. They gave me their contact information and they let me call them whenever I need help. I registered by myself and I came alone to do everything. The counselor just helped me register for classes. (Interview, January 21, 2020.)

When Miguel attends classes, he feels like he is treated the same as other students: “I don’t feel different than others. Same playing field. I don’t have an advantage or disadvantage among others. Instructors have all been positive and nice, they are inclusive. Easy to talk to” (Interview, January 21, 2020).

Daniel

Daniel is a 39-year-old community college student who identifies as a Puerto Rican male born in the United States. Daniel is not employed and takes classes in the evening. He is involved in the campus' horticulture club. Daniel is a first-generation college student, has children, does not speak Spanish, maintains a 3.5 GPA, and has attended this college for one semester.

Daniel feels a sense of belonging at the college and has had very positive experiences:

From the start of enrollment in classes to the way you're treated, I feel a sense of belonging. Even from the welcome you receive from the counselors to the people that assist you with the [student] I.D. They are very welcoming and friendly and it makes you feel good about the college as a whole. Staff and teachers are very nice and welcoming. They are very friendly and approachable. That's been my experience so far. (Interview, January 30, 2020.)

Ricardo

Ricardo is a 30-year-old community college student who identifies as a Mexican male born in the United States. He is employed full time and takes classes in the evening. He is not involved in any student clubs or organizations. Ricardo is a Veteran, first-generation college student, speaks Spanish, maintains a 3.0 GPA, has children, and has attended college for four semesters.

Ricardo feels that he belongs on this campus and had positive experiences as a student. He could not think of a time when he did not feel like he belonged. As a Veteran student, he was provided with individualized service which made him feel like he belonged: "Since I am a Veteran, I was able to talk to a counselor that works specifically

with Veterans and she told me about all the resources the college offered and she explained my GI benefits” (Interview, February 4, 2020). In the classroom, he also feels comfortable and welcomed: “Instructors provide equal treatment to all students. I’ve been in classes with other Hispanic students and they all get treated the same as well as any other race” (Interview, February 4, 2020).

Andres

Andres is a 19-year-old community college student who identifies as a Mexican male born in the United States. He is employed full time and takes classes in the evening. He is not involved in any student clubs or organizations. Andres is a first-generation college student, speaks Spanish, maintains a 3.0 GPA, and has attended college for four semesters.

Andres feels a sense of belonging on the campus. He shared that sense of belonging never crossed his mind until this interview:

I never gave it thought that I didn’t belong, I really feel this is a very diverse institution and it’s welcoming and encourages people to come. In high school, the college gave a presentation and they said it doesn’t matter what kind of race you are, you will be treated the same. And it made me feel like this would be a good place to study compared to other big schools where there is more of a White base. I may not feel as included as I would coming here. (Interview, February 5, 2020.)

Izzy

Izzy is a 19-year-old community college student who identifies as a Mexican male born in the United States. He is employed full time and takes classes in the evening. He is not involved in any student clubs or organizations. Izzy is a first-generation college student, a Veteran, does not speak Spanish, maintains a 3.4 GPA, and has attended college for four semesters.

Izzy was previously enrolled at the college but stopped out to join the Marines. He is now enrolled at the college for a second time. Izzy did not initially feel like college was for him, but after a period of adjusting, he now feels a sense of belonging:

When I came back from bootcamp. I was serious and to myself in a way. I didn't want to talk to anybody until I met certain people and saw what they were all about. My family was wondering why I was acting this way. My perspective on life flipped upside down. I was used to running and shooting every day. So, I was trying to readjust and sit down in classes. Over time I was able to let loose.

(Interview, February 5, 2020.)

Izzy explains that his instructors are the main reasons why he feels he belongs and is connected to the college:

I have two teachers that continue to push me on. My electronics teacher got me this new job that I have. She was able to help me financially and to be stable when I came back from the Marines. It makes me more motivated to come to her class because they actually care about us. There's a math teacher I visit every Wednesday. I talk to her about her day. She helps me out like with helping me with the process of my essay when I transfer to the university to get my bachelors. I had her my first semester and she's got to see me as a crappy student. She saw

me grow before I went to the Marines and now after I came back. (Interview, February 5, 2020.)

Kelly

Kelly is a 22-year-old community college student who identifies as a Colombian and was born in Colombia. She is employed part time and takes morning classes. Kelly participates in a Latinx club and is in the honor society club. She has attended college for four semesters, speaks Spanish, maintains a 3.8 GPA, and is a first-generation college student.

Kelly moved to the U.S. at age 11 after her mother, who worked for the Colombian government, transferred to a U.S. office on a diplomat visa. Kelly and her sisters moved to the U.S. after her mother settled in here. Kelly's father remained in Colombia until their house was sold, so the family was separated for some time. When Kelly first arrived in the U.S., she didn't speak English and was enrolled in a Spanish speaking only classroom, but within one year she transitioned to an all-English-speaking class. Kelly and her family moved to a Latinx neighborhood, which made the transition seamless for her. Kelly began to encounter barriers when she became a college-aged student. These barriers included her diplomat visa expiring, having to change her immigration status, paying international student tuition, and being threatened with deportation to a country she no longer had a connection to.

Although Kelly encountered barriers to her education as a college-aged student, she never felt like she didn't belong. Kelly feels a sense of belonging in college and describes her experience:

I never felt I didn't belong; this college is a highly diverse commuter school. The hardest part is commuting to school by bus and not knowing my way around anywhere. Once at school, I'm always pretty reserved and do not care to really make friends. My academic wit is something that I think helps me. Not only do all my professors really like me, but students come to me to find out things about assignments, tests, and so on, and eventually I end up always spending time with people. I never felt lonely or that I didn't belong. My way in was always academically. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Alejandra

Alejandra is a 19-year-old community college student who identifies as Colombian and was born in Colombia. She is not employed and takes both morning and evening classes. Alejandra participates in an honor society club, psychology club, paralegal club, and Model UN club. She has attended college for two semesters, speaks Spanish, maintains a 4.0 GPA and is not considered a first-generation college student.

Alejandra moved to the U.S. at the age of 17 when her mother was promoted by the international company she had worked at for 10 years. The company paid all moving expenses and paid for lawyers to pursue the permanent residency process for the entire family. Alejandra graduated from high school in Colombia, but she was encouraged to enroll as a senior in high school so that she could get a U.S. diploma, so she now possesses diplomas from both a Colombian and a U.S. high school.

Alejandra feels a sense of belonging at the college, but describes her initial academic experience in the U.S. as "very challenging":

At first, it was really hard for me to feel comfortable socializing because I wasn't as fluent in English as I am now, and I would get embarrassed every time I had to repeat myself because someone didn't understand me or whenever I saw confused faces while I talked. However, I know that people are not trying to be rude; it's not their fault if they don't understand. I'm not embarrassed of my accent or background story. In fact, I'm very proud of it and it's one of the first things I say whenever I introduce myself because it's such a big part of my identity, and I didn't realize that until I actually came to college and got out of the social context I grew up in. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Once Alejandra enrolled in college, her confidence increased and she feel very excited to be a part of the college-going experience:

My first semester in college I was excited to meet new people but nervous because of how self-conscious I am of my accent. However, this school is very diverse, and the community as a whole is very welcoming towards foreign people. So far, the professors I have had are always excited to hear about my background and are always eager to help students like me. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Lu

Lu is a 19-year-old community college student who identifies as Colombian and was born in Colombia. She is employed part time and full time depending on the classes she is taking. Lu participates in an Italian club and the nursing association club. She has attended college for three semesters, speaks Spanish, maintains a 3.9 GPA, and is a first-generation college student.

Lu moved to the U.S. at the age of three for her mother's job. Lu doesn't remember a lot about her move from Colombia, but she shared that her father had a tough time finding a job and mostly had to work in factories. Lu feels that she is very "Americanized" and referred to herself as having a millennial mentality: "I feel more American than Latino. My culture is millennial and American. But I do happen to speak some Spanish and still support my parents' Colombian culture" (Interview, February 6, 2020).

Lu doesn't feel an overall sense of belonging because of friends, family, and choices she's made:

I struggled with what my major was the first year and ended up switching, which held me back. I struggled with my youth and my jealousy of friends being away at college. I spent my weekends visiting them instead of studying, which held me back. My first semester I was nervous, scared, alone, and desperately jealous of my high school friends who were away at college and did not have to commute as I did. At that time, my parents lost their trust in me and did not support the life I was leading. They stopped paying for my tuition, which left me to pay all on my own. (Interview, February 6, 2020.)

Maya

Maya is a 20-year-old female student who identifies as Mexican and was born in Mexico. She is employed part time and does not participate in any clubs in college. She has attended the college for three semesters, maintains a 2.0 GPA, speaks Spanish, and is a first-generation college student.

Maya came to the U.S. at age three and moved into a small apartment with relatives. Maya's family moved to the U.S. for better work and educational opportunities. Maya enrolled in school and learned English very quickly. Because she moved to the U.S. at such a young age, Maya does not remember Mexico and does not consider it her home.

Maya has always felt a sense of belonging in college and in every other aspect of her life. She doesn't recall a time in college when she felt like she did not belong:

I always felt like I belonged. The students and teachers are all supportive and warm. I was excited to start college my first semester, make new friends, and get started on building my career and future. The campus is large and offers all of the classes I need to transfer to a university. All the instructors are all great and are happy to help. (Interview, February 7, 2020.)

Themes

The first research question aimed to document U.S. born Latinx students' sense of belonging. For U.S.-born Latinx students, being a commuter student played a critical role in their sense of belonging as well as in their motivation to attend college. For the foreign-born population, internal drive played a big part in sense of belonging as well as peer acceptance. In addition, acculturative stress was dependent on the age of arrival to the U.S. Many foreign-born Latinx students had a quick adjustment period or no adjustment period at all.

The second research question aimed to document lessons learned from foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx student experiences in relation to fostering sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus. As part of the interview, students were

asked to recommend how college administrators can make students feel welcome at an HSI-designated college campus. Key findings included the following:

Foreign-born Latinx students:

1. Have campus dialogue about undocumented students
2. Allow students to show their Latinx pride
3. Intentionally promote a diverse campus community

U.S.-born Latinx students:

1. Acknowledge students' existing characteristics
2. Communicate academic expectations up front

Although the themes for both U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinx students slightly overlapped, the importance they placed on certain recommendations varied between the two groups.

U.S.-born Latinx students.

Theme 1: Instructors as an essential part of belonging

Instructors played a significant role in U.S.-born Latinx students' sense of belonging. Students described that having Latinx instructors made them feel welcome and connected; however, the instructor did not necessarily have to be Latinx to make them feel a sense of belonging. For example, Izzy, who recently finished bootcamp in the Marines, described his experience:

I have two teachers that continue to push me on. My electronics teacher got me this new job that I have. She was able to help me financially and to be stable when I came back from the Marines. It makes me more motivated to come to class because they actually care about us. All the teachers I've had here have all been

White and it's fine. It's all about how they care for us and how they help us branch out. (Interview, February 5, 2020.)

Andres is a student who does not feel that instructors should change the way they teach because a student is of a certain race. Andres shared that colleges that have race-based initiatives are "stereotypical" and that he would rather be immersed with everyone at the college: "It's not about race. Instructors need to keep the classroom general and not single anyone out because of their race. They need to keep the curriculum generalized" (Interview, February 5, 2020).

Andres feels a sense of belonging at his HSI campus and contributes it to the instructors that have provided equal treatment and genuine care for all students despite their race/ethnicity. Andres also stated that maintaining a good relationship with his instructor is key to his sense of belonging:

Making sure you're on a first name basis with instructors is important. They are able to recognize you not as just a student, but for your personality and the relationship that you've built with them. I feel like that's an important part of me studying here. (Interview, February 5, 2020.)

Jade shared that having diverse instructors made her feel like she belongs on campus, but she also wants them to acknowledge their own biases: "It's not okay for instructors to choose their own race. Don't choose a race you like and help out those students first" (Interview, December 12, 2019).

Daniel shared that his instructors have always been respectful and very supportive even though they have not been Latinx. Daniel shared that his instructors "are very

friendly and approachable,” which makes him “feel good about the college as a whole” (Interview, January 30, 2020).

U.S.-born Latinx students described many instances of supportive instructors who have made a difference in their education and demonstrated genuine care and support.

Theme 2: Feeling of community

Experiencing a feeling of community where judgment does not exist and students are accepted is important to U.S.-born Latinx students. Sharing similar backgrounds and struggles is important to feeling a sense of belonging. Adan shared that when he first arrived at college, he noticed that a lot of his high school peers had also enrolled at the college, many of whom were Latinx. He related to these students because they experienced the same struggles that he had:

I feel like I belong here because all the students come from the same background. We come from low-income families and undocumented families, and there is no shame in that. Since we all have the same backgrounds, there is no reason to hide or be embarrassed about it. (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

Adan shared that he is accepted by peers and he is not judged about who he is or where he comes from. Similar to Adan, Janessa shared that she feels like she fits in because many students that attend the college are first-generation students:

It feels good to come to a place where we all come from the same background, like that we all have parents who didn't attend college and are still working in factories. We all faced the same struggles with not having money and being on financial aid. We understand each other. (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

Janessa stated that before attending a community college, she went to a four-year university but didn't feel like she belonged. She was active in the university and had friends, but she failed her courses and did not feel comfortable in that environment. At the community college, she earned good grades and felt more comfortable with its smaller size. She also interacted with students who did not judge her for who she was.

Izzy stated that he feels like he belongs at this college because his peers are similar to him and relate to his background:

Coming here to this college, I got a chance to see other Puerto Rican students. We know the same slang words like "Hey what's up Boricua?", and we automatically bond. We come from the same neighborhoods, so I know what they're like.

They're not stuck up like the rich people at other big schools. (Interview, February 5, 2020.)

Adan, Janessa, and Izzy felt that being part of a community that does not judge and in which they are accepted by their peers contributed to their sense of belonging. Feeling part of a close-knit community is important to U.S.-born Latinx students.

Theme 3: Campus climate as part of acceptance

An important contributor to U.S.-born Latinx students' sense of belonging is a campus climate in which they feel like they fit in not only in the classroom, but within other parts of campus as well. Dunkan shared his struggles as a commuter student, but he also shared what has helped him feel welcome:

I walk two hours a day get to school and to get back home. I'm usually tired and hungry when I get to school, especially when it's really cold outside. It's really hard for me. I also struggle a lot with my education. When I come to school, I

want to have positive experience because I go through a lot just to get to school. When I'm having a bad day, I usually go to the cafeteria to talk to the workers because they speak Spanish. It reminds me when my mom tries to calm me down when I'm having a bad day. I know that I can always talk to the cafeteria people in Spanish and they make my day. (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

Several participants shared that as commuter students, they do not always have time to participate in clubs or stay at the school for long periods of time outside of classes. They shared that it makes them feel accepted when the college offers Latinx programs even though they are not members. Janessa explained her perspective:

I know that the college offers a Hispanic club for students, so it makes me feel accepted. I don't have a lot of time to participate, but at least I know they have one and they value our culture. (Interview, November 25, 2019.)

Duncan also shared a similar response:

I'm not in any club, but I know the college offers them, like the Spanish club. They were promoting it by wearing sombreros and ponchos and it's not like they are making fun of them, but it was almost like they were embracing the culture. They accept it, you know. The ponchos do look funny if you're not from my culture, but they accepted it. (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

In contrast, Andres shared that although he understands the premise of Latinx clubs and their value, they are not for him:

I know the college has some cultural Hispanic club, but I'm not in it. But it shows they are open about ethnic origin and trying to keep traditions alive, and it's good to help people connect with their culture. But I think they are really stereotypical,

which plays into me not wanting to go. It's just so purely stereotypical with their activities, but I don't want join specifically to feel accepted. I want to integrate in the whole campus and not be singled out. It also depends on the intention of the group. I would join, but I guess if it's to my satisfaction and if it's something I'm looking for. (Interview, February 5, 2020.)

Students also shared times when they felt like they belonged in and around campus. Daniel shared that he has had very positive and welcoming experiences at the college:

From the very start to enrollment in classes, to the way you're treated here, to the welcome you receive from the counselors, has been very positive. The people that assist with the [student] I.D. cards and take your picture has been very welcoming. They are very welcoming and friendly and it makes you feel good about the college as a whole. Staff and teachers are very nice and welcoming. They are very friendly and approachable. That's been my experience so far. (Interview, January 30, 2020.)

In contrast, two students mentioned that sense of belonging is a mutual responsibility. Not only does the campus need to offer a welcoming environment, but the students need to take some responsibility for their own sense of belonging. Lydia explained this perspective:

You know, as students, we have to do our part, too. You can only lead a horse to water. If the school offers all these services, resources, and clubs and students don't take advantage of it, then it's not the school's fault. And the other way

around, too. The student can't do everything alone. (Interview, December 13, 2019.)

Ricardo shared a similar perspective. He mentioned that “sense of belonging has to come from me, not the school. It's up to me to try to fit in. The school has partial responsibility though” (Interview, February 4, 2020).

In sum, students reflected on various people around the campus that have made a difference in their sense of belonging and expressed feeling very supported. In certain instances, students searched out those supports. On the other hand, two students mentioned that sense of belonging was a mutual responsibility between the student and the school.

Theme 4: Valuing students' individuality

Students shared that sense of belonging is felt when community colleges value individual students for their unique characteristics and ensure that students are not shamed for their differences. For example, Izzy shared that he feels supported by his instructors because they don't care what “baggage” you come in with:

I feel everyone is treated fairly in the classroom. No one is excluded because of their color. I feel that teachers give equal respect to everyone. Even if someone skips class or don't finish homework, they still cared about you and your success. (Interview, February 5, 2020.)

Ricardo is a Veteran who just returned from the Army. He stated that it was difficult adjusting, but he was able to get help from his counselor at the school. Despite coming in with unique challenges, he was still able to get support:

I didn't know what was happening, but my counselor helped me get to know the campus. She doesn't work there anymore. They have a Veteran center here, so I would get help in there and I would hang out there. They helped me get acclimated and gave me information about what I am eligible for and that they have a Veteran's center especially for people like me. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

In contrast to these stories of valuing the individual, several students discussed times when their educational abilities appeared to be an inconvenience to instructors and tutors, which resulted in feelings of not belonging. Dunkan explained his experience:

I had a bad experience in the classroom because of my skill level. Do I feel accepted? Yes. Cared for? No. A professor didn't care for me. It was my developmental English class. I couldn't keep up. She was tough. We couldn't speak in class; she would shut us down and kick us out of the classroom. I didn't end up passing the class. This is really personal. Still today it hits me hard. She said, "Maybe you're not ready for college. Maybe you're not cut out for this." That is the most crushing experience I've ever had. It was the most hurtful thing anyone has ever said to me in the past five years.

Lydia, who enrolled in college as an older adult, expressed disappointment as well:

I had to write a research paper and I went to the writing center. I really don't know how to write a paper; this was my first time. When I went to the writing center, I sat with an instructor and he was like "do a website," and I didn't understand what he meant. It was kind of my first time using a computer for writing papers. I was there for five hours for a paper that should've taken 30

minutes. I just did it the best way I could. He was busy playing with his phone. I know there are smarter kids than me, but he didn't really help me. I needed more help. There was an older guy there that ended up helping me. (Interview, December 13, 2019.)

Duncan shared another story in which his friend worked an all-day shift and went to school after work. They both were in the same class, and Duncan could see how tired his friend was. Duncan explained how important it is for instructors to show empathy for these students:

My friend was tired and was really quiet in class. He works two jobs to pay for school. The instructor didn't even take into consideration that students will come to class with no energy and tired. But instructors shouldn't pry if they see it; they should empathize. Empathizing is the most important thing an instructor can do; you don't have to understand it, but you can empathize and give them space and don't hound them for not participating. (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

To summarize Theme 4, individuality is important to students and their sense of belonging. Students will attend community colleges with their own unique circumstances and qualities. The following section describes the themes for the foreign-born Latinx population, which is the second part of the first research question: "How do U.S.-born and *foreign-born* Latinx populations differ in describing sense of belonging at an HSI campus?"

Foreign-born Latinx students.

Theme 1: Student clubs (acceptance by peers)

The foreign-born Latinx population shared that they felt a sense of belonging when they felt accepted by their peers. Alejandra, who was born in Colombia, shared that her sense of belonging is attributed to participating in student clubs and meeting other students similar to her:

When I enrolled in extracurricular activities, such as clubs, my sense of belonging increased. For example, I am part of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor society, and I spend most of the day in their office. That's always where I eat lunch and where I go in between classes, and that is where I met my closest friends in college.

(Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Lu, also born in Colombia, shared that her sense of belonging was attributed to acceptance by her peers in the student club:

During my time with the Student Nurses Association, I was elected by my peers to serve as the association's president for our graduating class. That position allowed me to advocate for our nursing class as well as create professional relationships with my professors. This was the most sense of belonging I had all through college. (Interview, February 6, 2020.)

Sol had an experience where she felt like her leadership skills increased as a part of being in student clubs. As a club leader, she supported other students who were struggling to fit in at the college. Being an undocumented student herself and struggling to find resources, she was able to share the resources that she found with her undocumented peers. In contrast to Alejandra and Lu, Sol felt like she belonged among her peers but not within the college:

As a club leader, I felt that the campus did not have an interest in the students. We were unable to post images of solidarity or print anything. We couldn't put up tables with flyers and we couldn't do a silent protest. I asked if we could put a Monarch butterfly on the RISE act flyer and they said we were not allowed to. The employee that runs the clubs said the executives were not on board with any of this. We are a Hispanic-serving institution, but you wouldn't even know it. You can't even tell. (Interview, January 21, 2020.)

Alejandra reflected on the time spent in high school where she did not want to interact with peers because they were not diverse. She did not feel comfortable and, therefore, felt like she did not belong. Now that she is enrolled in a diverse college, she feels like she belongs:

When I was in high school, the population wasn't diverse, so I would never talk or participate in class. I didn't feel as motivated to join clubs and other organizations, and I didn't develop a strong teacher-student relationship or relationships with my classmates as much as I do now. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Foreign-born students attributed sense of belonging to being accepted by their peers, specifically when they participated in student clubs where similarities are shared among one another.

Theme 2: Feeling of community

Foreign-born Latinx students described feeling a sense of belonging when the campus community provided them with the help necessary for them to be successful. In essence, they feel a sense of belonging in a place where they are supported.

Kelly explained that if not for her Latinx counselor, she would not have been academically successful:

I had an amazing Latinx academic advisor, but she doesn't work here anymore. I felt she really wanted to help me make the best choices. I would speak to my friends who would go to other advisers and they had to wait weeks to get in, wait for hours to be seen, and end up confused as to what classes counted for what requirement anyway. I was very thankful for my advisor and do attribute my educational success in part to her. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Alejandra shared that the college's diverse student body has made her feel comfortable and like she is at a second home. Although not all minority students are her friends, she feels good knowing there is more diversity in college than high school:

The fact that this college is a very diverse community, makes me feel more welcomed and represented. It definitely contributes to my educational success. I can also develop a strong student-teacher relationship because this college is so diverse. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Theme 3: Adjustment/acculturative stress in college

Foreign-born students reported their experiences adjusting to a new country. By the time students arrived in college, they expressed feeling fully adjusted to a new culture; however, some described a few minor setbacks that they overcame fairly quickly.

Maya explains that she moved to the U.S. at two years old, before she started speaking. However, because she always lived in Latinx or immigrant communities she feels she developed a strong Hispanic accent that she did not like. She felt like she had to get rid of her accent in order to fit in at college:

In high school, I used to hear Hispanic accents and I realized that if I didn't get rid of it, I would never fit in at college. I vowed to get rid of it before I went to college. I would sit in front of the T.V. and study every character and enunciate how they spoke English, and that is why I don't have an accent today. I'm not even sure if I ever even had an accent, but I just wanted to make sure I didn't have one. (Interview, February 7, 2020.)

Alejandra also shared her experience with an accent:

My first semester in college, I was excited to meet new people but nervous because of how self-conscious I am of my accent. At first, it was really hard for me to feel comfortable socializing because I wasn't as fluent in English as I am now in my second semester. I would get embarrassed every time I had to repeat myself because someone didn't understand me or whenever I saw confused faces while I talked. However, I know that people are not trying to be rude; it's not their fault if they don't understand. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Foreign-born students described varying and unique experiences adjusting to the U.S. depending on their age of arrival. For example, Lu shared that because she was only three years old when she arrived, she does not feel a connection to Colombia; she feels American. She did not have a hard time adjusting to the move. Her struggle is that her parents could not send her to an out-of-state school, so she could not experience living in a dorm:

Since I was only three when we moved here, I did not have struggles growing up in America; in fact, I feel more American than Latino. Our first neighborhood in New Jersey was heavily Hispanic, which I think helped the rest of my family

adjust. By the time we moved to Illinois we had all adapted to the American lifestyle and I cannot think of many struggles. However, I had a hard time coming to terms that my family could not afford college outside of Illinois or that I could not board at college, as that to me was the true American college experience.

(Interview, February 6, 2020.)

Maya also moved to the U.S. at age three, so like Lu, she did not struggle to adjust to a new country:

I moved to the U.S. at a young age, so I don't feel any different because I'm foreign-born. I became a U.S. citizen at age eight and didn't even know what that meant, I just went to the ceremony. I feel just as American as any other American in the U.S. The only issue was my accent, but I got rid of it. (Interview, February 7, 2020.)

Alejandra arrived to the U.S. from Colombia at age 17 and had a different experience than Maya and Lu. Alejandra had to adjust for about a full year before she finally felt that she belonged. She did not feel a sense of belonging until she enrolled in college:

The English language was challenging for me. My papers were graded exactly as those who have spoken the language their whole life. I had to do a lot of extra work and often used the translator app to look up words that were super simple for someone whose main language is English. It was the same for reading. I didn't know a lot of words that were obvious for everyone else. For example, I had to take a poetry class the semester I got to the U.S. It was hard for my American classmates to write poetry, but it was nothing compared to how challenging it is to

write poetry in a language that you're new to, and surprisingly, I got better grades than a lot of my friends when we compared our papers. I worked harder because it was more challenging for me and I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it. I had a rough time, but once I got to college it was so different. Maybe this is because I already went through the rough time first. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Kelly moved to the U.S. at age 11. She felt that she adjusted quickly because she moved to a primarily Latinx area where there were a lot of Colombians:

When I first arrived in the U.S., we moved to an area with a lot of Colombian people and a lot of Colombian restaurants, so the food and people were all familiar. At school, I was placed in a classroom of all Spanish speaking students. I was able to make friends quickly. Within the year I was fluent in English and joined the regular classrooms. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

On her college campus, Kelly felt like she belonged and did not contribute her diplomat visa to sense of belonging:

The biggest barrier was when I grew out of being a dependent of my parents and my diplomatic visa was expiring. I had to change my immigration status, and that was incredibly difficult. I first became an international student for a semester or two. My tuition sky rocketed, and that was hard for my parents. This didn't affect my sense of belonging in college, it just meant I had to get my status to stay in school. This had nothing to do with feeling accepted in school. (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Lessons Learned

The second research question involved documenting and sharing lessons learned in fostering sense of belonging among Latinx subgroups at an HSI-designated community college. The following lessons, as recommended by participants, will be described:

Foreign-born Latinx students' recommendations:

1. Have campus dialogue about undocumented students
2. Allow students to show their Latinx pride
3. Intentionally promote a diverse campus community

U.S.-born Latinx students' recommendations:

1. Acknowledge students' existing characteristics
2. Communicate academic expectations up front

Foreign-born Latinx students' recommendations.

Lesson 1: Have campus dialogue about undocumented students

Although not all foreign-born students that participated in the study were undocumented, some were in the U.S. on a diplomat visa. Students shared that college employees did not exhibit a basic level of understanding of what it meant to be undocumented, or they were not aware of the resources that existed for those students. Students recommended that college employees at least have a basic understanding of the type of students they might encounter in a community college.

Sol: "There are not enough resources for undocumented students. If there are, they are hiding and hard to find where they are at. I encourage administrators to market them a lot more. I had to search a lot to find something. It's funny because the way I find resources is to tell people I am undocumented. Many people tip toe around the word—it's

like the college employees are more afraid to talk about being undocumented than I am.” (Interview, January 21, 2020.)

Kelly: “Although I am not undocumented, there was a time when my visa was expiring and I had to make a quick decision about my tuition classification. I talked to someone about international students’ tuition and they had no ideas what I was talking about. It would be helpful for administrators to train their employees on that kind of stuff.” (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Sol: “Conversations need to occur on campus about undocumented students and whether they align with [employees’] beliefs or not. You can’t avoid them. The environment will never feel welcoming if the dialogue does not happen.” (Interview, January 21, 2020.)

Lesson 2: Allow students to show their Latinx pride

Students shared that they have a lot of pride in who they are and where they came from. The campus does not promote being a Hispanic-serving institution, so students would like to showcase that a lot more and be more intentional about the campus’ diversity.

Kelly: “Administrators should value the individuality of being Latinx. If they had a Colombian student club, I would join. The campus always thinks they are being culturally responsive, but they celebrate Latinx holidays that I don’t even celebrate as a Colombian.” (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Maya: “Decorating our graduation caps with Hispanic sayings should be allowed. This is the time where we can express who we are and thank the people we love the most.

They make it all political, so that's why they don't want us to do it. It's probably because of the political environment.” (Interview, February 7, 2020.)

Lu: “I've haven't seen the campus do much for Hispanic heritage month. I would love to do a theme where every Hispanic country brings in like their food, or books, or something representing each country. People always confuse me for Mexican, so I would love to talk to people about Colombia.” (Interview, February 6, 2020.)

Lesson 3: Intentionally promote a diverse campus community

Students shared that they felt a sense of belonging on campus when administrators embraced the diversity of the student body and were intentional about accommodating them. Students also connected more to employees who were diverse. They did not feel like they belonged, however, when they could not bring their Spanish speaking parents to campus because employees did not speak Spanish and the campus' marketing materials were not available in Spanish.

Kelly: “I had an amazing Latinx academic advisor, but she doesn't work here anymore. I felt she really wanted to help me make the best choices. Administrators should have diversity in critical areas of the college like advising.” (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Sol: “The campus doesn't do everything it can to make students feel welcome. Even though my mom doesn't know a lot about going to college, she is still the main person that influences me to go to college, and her opinion matters. When she can't even come to campus because nobody speaks Spanish and everything is in English, how is she supposed to help me?” (Interview, January 21, 2020.)

U.S.-born Latinx students' recommendations.

Lesson 1: Acknowledge students' existing characteristics

Students shared that they experience sense of belonging when the college accepts them for who they are and for the unique characteristics they come to campus with. Further, students feel accepted when administrators ensure they have access to the resources necessary for success. Being in an environment free from judgement and where appropriate resources are available helps U.S.-born Latinx students feel like they belong. The following cases briefly describe these sentiments.

Dunkan: “My friend works two jobs and he’s always tired. Teachers need to realize he has to work to pay for college. Don’t get mad or hound him because he is not participating in class. Just as long as he does the work and gets good grades is all that matters.” (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

Janessa: “I’m a first-generation student. That means my parents don’t understand the college process and neither do I because this is my first time going to college. Don’t look at me like I’m dumb because I don’t know. Just help out and explain what I have to do.” (Interview, November 25, 2019.)

Lydia: “I’m 50 years old and have never used a computer before. People need to be patient with me and don’t expect for me to know everything. I’m here to learn. Administrators need to be patient with students’ skill levels.” (Interview, December 13, 2019.)

Dunkan: “Administrators need to talk to instructors about not judging. My teacher was very annoyed with me because of my skill level and humiliated me.” (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

Lesson 2: Communicate academic expectations up front

Many U.S.-born participants shared that the college did not provide them with sufficient information to make sound educational decisions during their first semester in college. As a result, these students faced additional barriers to their education. Students recommended that administrators work to change their outreach efforts to new students as well as provide sufficient information up front to choose the right major and to take the appropriate courses in their program. The inability to have clear expectations early on in their program made students feel like they did not belong at the college because they were so confused about the college-going process. The following cases briefly describe some of the barriers these students experienced.

Janessa: “Have patience with first-generation students because it is their first time being in college. Don’t assume, we are dumb just because we are Hispanic. Just acknowledge we might need a little bit more help.” (Interview, November 25, 2019.)

Lydia: “Nobody reaches out to you here. They need to reach out to new students. I figure things out on my own because nobody reaches out.” (Interview, December 13, 2019.)

Adan: “Counselors should give out the academic plan a lot sooner in order to map out classes and to have a guide for which classes we have to take.” (Interview, December 4, 2019.)

Ricardo: “Help students pay attention and understand the curriculum so they are not switching majors. Talk to students more about the importance of what the major is, how long it will take, and which classes you have to take.” (Interview, February 4, 2020.)

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented critical demographic, familial and cultural information about participants to gain a better understanding of who they are and where they come from. Participants also shared, in their own words, how they define sense of belonging at an HSI campus. The chapter documented findings related to both of the research questions investigated. Several themes emerged from each question, which were described and supported by participant quotes.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion

Problem Statement

A sense of not belonging may hinder Latinx students' educational attainment because they face unique circumstances in the U.S. (Loveland, 2018). Low educational attainment for both foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx populations remains a concern for many colleges; however, foreign-born Latinx students have not attained the same level of achievement as their U.S.-born Latinx peers. In 2015, data demonstrated that 20% of the U.S.-born Latinx population held a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 12% of the foreign-born Latinx population (Lopez & Patten, 2015). Reasons for this disparity may be attributed to lower rates of sense of belonging and satisfaction among foreign-born students. Fostering a sense of belonging on college campuses can help Latinx students overcome barriers to academic achievement and degree completion.

Purpose of the Study

Although existing research has established that feelings of not belonging can hinder Latinx students' educational attainment, it has not yet been determined if Latinx foreign-born and U.S.-born students experience sense of belonging in disparate ways. It

also has not been determined what contributes to sense of belonging among this unique subgroup of students at his-designated community colleges, whose Latinx student population is at least 25% of the total population. Very few studies disaggregate the various Latinx origin groups making it challenging to capture the unique factors that are contributing to the true academic resiliency of Latinx students. Both U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinx students face obstacles and challenges; however, they are often viewed as one single population, which makes it difficult to isolate the disparities for further research (Martinez-Pons & Zimmerman, 1990).

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to foreign-born and U.S-born students' sense of belonging and to gain insights into the differences of sense of belonging among these two different subgroups of students. The second purpose is to document and share lessons learned in fostering sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus. The lessons learned serve as recommendations for practitioners and leaders as they work with Latinx subgroups on community college campuses.

The following questions guided this research:

- 1) How do foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students differ in describing sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?
- 2) What lessons can be learned from the experiences of foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students in relation to fostering sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?

Methodology

I used a qualitative case study approach so that I could explore, in depth, each participants' experience as narrated in their own words. This approach also enabled me to capture the cultural diversity and uniqueness of each student. To obtain the depth of these powerful experiences, I conducted semi-structured interviews to hear students' voices more directly. I administered a demographic survey to obtain information about each student's background as well as information about their culture, family, and level of college engagement.

Recapitulation of Findings

Research Question 1: How do foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students differ in describing sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?

Both the U.S.-born population and the foreign-born population described times when they felt a sense of belonging and times when they did not feel a sense of belonging at the HSI community college campus. I found that the U.S.-born population attributed their sense of belonging primarily to the instructors in the classroom. When an instructor treated students equally, displayed genuine care, and supported students in and outside the classroom, students described feeling connected to that instructor and to the school. Some U.S.-born students attributed their sense of belonging specifically to Latinx instructors; however, they indicated that this was not the only reason they connected to their instructors. They explained that instructors fostered a sense of belonging through their actions in the classroom and not through their identity as Latinx individuals. U.S.-born students agreed that an instructor's race was less important than the level of care and support they provided in fostering a sense of belonging.

In contrast to the U.S.-born students, foreign-born students did not attribute their sense of belonging to instructors. Foreign-born students credited their sense of belonging to being accepted by peers, particularly through student clubs. Membership in student clubs contributed highly to their sense of belonging. Foreign-born students shared that if it were not for student clubs, where they encounter students similar to themselves, they would not have felt like they fit in or belonged. Although U.S.-born students also contributed their sense of belonging to being accepted by peers, they did not intentionally seek out acceptance through student clubs. U.S.-born students expressed that these clubs were not “for them,” and they felt that as commuter students, they did not have time to join clubs or participate in other extracurricular activities. U.S.-born students were focused solely on attending classes. For these students, instructors were the primary and most important points of contact and, as a result, contributed significantly to students’ sense of belonging.

For U.S.-born students, acceptance by peers contributed to “feelings of community” where judgment does not exist and students accept one another despite their financial and family background. Sharing similar backgrounds and struggles fostered “feelings of community” for foreign-born students as well, but it manifested in a different way. Foreign-born students described feeling a sense of community in an environment that was diverse and that provided the support necessary for their success.

For U.S.-born students, campus climate contributed to their sense of belonging. The findings suggest that even though U.S.-born students did not participate in many campus activities, the mere fact that the college offered diverse programming made them feel accepted. For example, a few students noticed that the college offered Latinx clubs,

but were not members. They mentioned that just by knowing the college offered it, they felt welcome and that they can join at any time.

Lastly, the foreign-born participants who arrived in the U.S. at ages two, three, and 11 did not indicate acculturative stress as a barrier to their sense of belonging. These participants described moving to primarily Latinx areas upon their arrival, which minimized any acculturative stress symptoms. Also, because of their young age, they felt very immersed in the American culture growing up and felt no connection to their country of birth. On the other hand, the foreign-born participant who arrived in the U.S. at age 17 moved into a predominantly White neighborhood, which had a significant impact on her sense of belonging as well as on her educational and personal adjustment; however, it took about one year in high school to adjust, and she felt a sense of belonging once she enrolled in a diverse commuter college. This participant did not report any acculturative symptoms during her college years. I found that primarily for foreign-born students, a high degree of self-motivation was a major influencer on their sense of belonging and their motivation to succeed in college.

Research Question 2: What lessons can be learned from the experiences of foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students in relation to fostering sense of belonging at an HSI-designated community college campus?

The lessons learned for both the foreign-born population and the U.S.-born population varied significantly. The foreign-born students made recommendations that were race/ethnicity oriented, whereas the U.S.-born students' recommendations had to do with acknowledging students' individual characteristics and communicating educational processes more efficiently. The foreign-born students wanted to see administrators train

their staff in the basics of serving undocumented students, offer more resources for undocumented students, and make these resources highly visible to the campus community. Foreign-born students also recommended that campus allow students to display their Latinx pride through activities such as decorating their graduation caps and wearing Latinx stoles and Zarape's for the graduation ceremony. Also, they recommended creating events and displays for Hispanic heritage month that highlighted all Spanish speaking countries. Lastly, foreign-born students want to be able to connect with Latinx advisors and front-line staff. Promoting a more diverse campus workforce is essential to make this happen.

One of the themes that emerged for the U.S.-born participants was accepting students for who they are and the characteristics they come to campus with. All students come with their own unique set of educational and personal experiences. This means that colleges should be open to working with students at various skill levels and not judge them for needing additional support. The second theme that emerged for U.S.-born students was providing sufficient and appropriate information so that students can be successful. Many students felt misguided or guided too late in their programs. Colleges need to do additional outreach to new students and first-generation students.

Recommendations

Sense of belonging.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) measured Latinx students' sense of belonging by looking at their attachment to the college and their level of participation in campus activities. The researchers found that commitment in social-community organizations was the most significant factor related to sense of belonging. The findings in this research

study demonstrated this to be in line with the foreign-born Latinx students in the current study, but not the U.S.-born Latinx students. U.S.-born Latinx commuter students had no intention to participate in any type of organization or club due to obligations they had outside of school; therefore, they attributed their sense of belonging to the caring, genuine characteristics of their instructors.

Holloway-Friesen (2018) found that the adjustment process for commuter students is different than for other types of students. This HSI community college is a commuter campus, and findings of the current study are in agreement with those of Holloway-Friesen's study. The participants in this study match the characteristics of Holloway-Friesen study in that they are commuters, students of color and most were not involved in campus activities. This study found that the primary contributor to sense of belonging for Latinx U.S.-born commuter students is faculty relationship development. As such, college leaders should embrace the differences between the two subgroups and acknowledge the characteristics of the population they serve. Investing resources into faculty mentoring may have a bigger impact than student clubs for this specific population.

The U.S.-born students in this study did not identify sense of belonging with instructors based on their race/ethnicity. It was more important for students that instructors so demonstrated genuine care for and equal treatment of all students. These findings run counter to those in a study by Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, and Plum (2004), which discovered that students felt a greater sense of belonging and more motivated to succeed in college when they had strong relationships with Latinx faculty. Foreign-born students in the current study also expressed that strong relationships with

Latinx instructors did not significantly impact their motivation to succeed. Rather, Foreign-born students identified internal drive as their main motivation to succeed.

Hispanic-Serving institution designation.

Research indicates that the designation as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) was not coined with a mission; therefore, many researchers are attempting to define what it really means to be an HSI. Researchers have concluded that the designation is idealistic, political, closeted, and not embraced or advertised (Santiago, 2012; Garcia, 2017). These findings are in line with what the participants shared about this HSI community college. Most of the study participants indicated they have never heard of the term HSI before, have not seen it advertised anywhere and did not know what it meant. Students in this study described the HSI designation as not advertised. Dunkan stated “I’ve never heard of the term HSI nor have I heard about what it means”. Similarly, Daniel stated “If you wouldn’t have told me this school was an HSI, I wouldn’t have known. I haven’t seen any signs or emails or anything saying we are an HSI. I mean I guess they have Spanish classes, but so does every other college”. These statements outline the need to communicate the designation to students and to convey the commitment to the Latinx population. The president and the leadership team must initiate and set the tone for practices that support Latinx students. Presidents must share their vision of an institutional culture that welcomes Latinx students and embraces the HSI designation.

Acculturative Stress

Although these findings are generally compatible with the work done on acculturation and acculturative stress, it is important to note that the foreign-born Latinx

participants in this study did not experience acculturative stress nor did they connect it with sense of belonging *by the time they arrived in college*. An important finding is the absence of acculturative stress with foreign-born Latinx students in college. By the time these students enrolled in college, they had either already experienced acculturation at an earlier time or did not experience it all; therefore, acculturative stress did not impact their sense of belonging in college. It may be important to note that three of the five foreign-born participants arrived in the U.S. at a young age, which may have impacted the results. According to Kurtz-Costes and Pungello (2000), children adjust more easily to migration than do teenagers or adults because children have less defined cultural identities than do teenagers or adults. The participant who was 11 at the time of arrival did not report any adjustment challenges. The participant who was 17 at the time arrival did experience challenges adjusting but overcame them quickly and did not experience challenges adapting to college one year later.

Limitations

The findings of my study are restricted to the experiences of U.S.-born students and foreign-born students who identify as Latinx, commuters, and first generation and who have family and work obligations to attend to. Being a commuter student comes with its own unique set of challenges that may paint an entirely different picture of how they define sense of belonging. Coupling commuter status with being foreign-born or with other factors that were presented in the study may mean that other variables, not discussed in the study, could potentially contribute to these students' sense of belonging.

Additionally, the age of the participants ranged from 18 and 50, but most of the students who participated in the study were 18 to 19 years of age. There were three adult

students who were 30, 39, and 50 and were parents. This population is not typical of a community college student profile. Community colleges tend to serve older adults over the age of 25; however, the population in this study was not truly reflective of a community college student. Some factors, such as first-generation status, is typical, but not the age ranges presented.

Lastly, the foreign-born participants were between 19 and 20-years old, commuters, and first-generation students. Three foreign-born students arrived in the U.S. at ages two and three, and the other two foreign-born participants arrived in the U.S. at ages 11 and 17. The experiences of these students were all unique and may not be representative of all foreign-born students in the U.S. Also, the foreign-born participants were born in either Mexico or Colombia, so they do not represent all foreign-born populations. Having a larger sample would have helped the researcher see emerging patterns more clearly. Importantly, the goal of this study was not to generalize to all Latinx populations; rather, it was to illuminate the fact that the Latinx population have varying experiences and different motivations to succeed.

Implications for Research and Practice

One avenue for further study would be research into the specific subcultures within the foreign-born Latinx population in an HSI-designated community college setting. For example, this study contained participants that arrived in the U.S. on a diplomat visa, were undocumented, or were U.S. citizens by the time they enrolled in college. These subgroups, although all foreign-born, had very different experiences and approached sense of belonging and adjustment very differently. Because of the variation in experiences based on age of arrival and country of origin, it is important to monitor

how their sense of belonging develops and evolves over time in college, especially for the foreign-born students who moved to the U.S. at an older age.

This study offers two implications for practice. First, in light of the college's designation as a Hispanic-serving institution, the president and the leadership team must initiate and set the tone for practices that support Latinx students. Presidents must share their vision of an institutional culture that supports and welcomes Latinx students as an asset and not a liability. Students in the study reported not knowing anything about an HSI designation or its implications. The college's leadership team should meaningfully convey their institutional commitment to being an HSI and continue to foster sense of belonging by accepting the recommendations that student's suggested. This message can be relayed by intentionally promoting a diverse campus, accepting students as they are, creating consistent messaging about expectations, and encouraging an active campus dialogue. Taking these steps can foster an institutional commitment of truly serving the Latinx population.

Second, findings suggested that students thrive and feel like they belong when they receive genuine care and support from their instructors. The institution should create opportunities inside the classroom to foster an environment where intentional faculty-student relationship building can occur. Latinx commuter students have many obligations outside of the classroom and may not be able to participate in programs or initiatives outside of the classroom setting. Intentional relationship building during class time is a critical piece to students' success. Participants shared that they have other responsibilities outside of school that prohibit them from being more active and engaging with campus activities. For example, Andres, a participant, shared "building relationships with

instructors is so important to success. Making sure you're on a first name basis with instructors and standing out for your personality and relationship is important for me studying here". In addition, Izzy, mentioned that his instructor keeps him motivated in the classroom. Izzy shared "it makes me more motivated to come to her [instructor] class because she actually cares about us". These student statements are crucial to students' sense belonging and to the care and support instructors provide in the classroom.

Conclusion

This dissertation explored how foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx student's experienced and viewed sense of belonging in a community college designated a Hispanic serving institution. Exploring each subgroup separately allowed subcultural distinctions to emerge, but also allowed each subgroup to embrace one another's commonalities. As a result, the findings of this study demonstrated that sense of belonging is experienced in disparate ways among foreign-born and U.S.-born Latinx students and the way they experience sense of belonging is credited to varying viewpoints. The U.S.-born Latinx students credited their sense of belonging to instructors who demonstrated genuineness and support in and out of the classroom irrespective of the instructor's ethnicity. Foreign-born Latinx students credited their sense of belonging to being accepted by peers in a student club setting where they share commonalities among other diverse peers. Both subgroups embraced and desired a feeling of community among peers, but it manifested in disparate ways.

This research demonstrated the importance of disaggregating the Latinx population to gain a better understanding of the characteristics associated with each subgroup. Many studies combine the Latinx population resulting in generalizations. It is

imperative for college leaders to know and embrace their students before considering a one-size-fits all approach to the Latinx population.

References

- Burchard, E. G., Borrell, L. N., Choudhry, S., Naqvi, M., Hui-Ju Tsai, Rodriguez-Santana, J. R., ... Risch, N. (2005). Latino populations: A unique opportunity for the study of race, genetics, and social environment in epidemiological research. *American Journal of Public Health, 95*(12), 2161–2168. [DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2005.068668](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2005.068668)
- Castillo, L. G., Cano, M. A., Chen, S. W., Blucker, R. T., & Olds, T. S. (2008). Family conflict and intragroup marginalization as predictors of acculturative stress in Latino college students. *International Journal of Stress Management, 15*(1), 43–52. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1072-5245.15.1.43>
- Chun, H., Marin, M. R., Schwartz, J. P., Pham, A., & Castro-Olivo, S. M. (2016). Psychosociocultural structural model of college success among Latina/o students in Hispanic-serving institutions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 9*(4), 385–400. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039881>
- Colosi, H. A., Costache, C., & Colosi, I. A. (2019). Informational privacy, confidentiality and data security in research involving human subjects. *Applied Medical Informatics, 41*, 16. <https://ami.info.umfcluj.ro/index.php/AMI/article/view/728>
- College Fact Book (2018). Department of research and Institutional Effectiveness.
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C.N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Crockett, L. J., Iturbide, M. I., Torres Stone, R. A., McGinley, M., Raffaelli, M., & Carlo, G. (2007). Acculturative stress, social support, and coping: Relations to

psychological adjustment among Mexican American college students. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13(4), 347–355.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.13.4.347>

Dayton, B., Gonzales-Vasquez, N., Martinez, C.R. & Plum, C. (2004). Hispanic-serving institutions through the eyes of students and administrators. *New Directions for Student Services*, Spring (105), 29-40. <https://doi.org/10.1002/55.114>

Enyioha, J. C. (2019). College access for undocumented students and law. *Educational Considerations*, 45(1), <https://doi.org/10.4148/0146-9282.2168>

Erisman, W., & Looney, S. (2007). Opening the door to the American dream: Increasing higher education access and success for immigrants. *Institute for Higher Education Policy*. <http://www.ihep.org/research/publications/opening-door-american-dream-increasing-higher-education-access-and-success-0>

Eskay, M. K., Onu, V. C., Obiyo, N. O., Igbo, J. N., & Udaya, J. (2012). Surviving as foreign-born immigrants in America's higher education: Eight exemplary cases. *US-China Education Review B* 2, 236–243. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED532153>

Flores, A. (2018, September 18). 2015, *Hispanic population in the United States statistical portrait*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2017/09/18/2015-statistical-information-on-hispanics-in-united-states/>

Garcia, G., & Taylor, M. (2017). A closer look at Hispanic-serving institutions. *Higher Education Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2017/09/18/closer-look-hispanic-serving-institutions/>

Garcia, G. A., & Dwyer, B. (2018). Exploring college students' identification with an organizational identity for serving Latinx students at a Hispanic serving institution

(HSI) and an emerging HSI. *American Journal of Education*, 124(2), 191–215.

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1166780>

Garcia, C. E. (2019). Belonging in a predominantly White institution: The role of membership in Latina/o sororities and fraternities. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000126>

Greene, T. G., Marti, C. N., & McClenney, K. (2008). The effort-outcome gap: Differences for African American and Hispanic community college students in student engagement and academic achievement. *Journal of Higher Education*, 79(5), 513–539. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2008.11772115>

Gummadam, P., Pittman, L., & Ioffe, M. (2016). School belonging, ethnic identity, and psychological adjustment among ethnic minority college students. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 84(2), 289-306.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2015.1048844>

Holloway-Friesen, H. (2018). On the road home: a content analysis of commuters' sense of belonging. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 36(2), 81-96.

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, 70(4), 324–345. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2673270>

Hussain, M., & Jones, M. (2019). Discrimination, diversity, and sense of belonging: Experiences of students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000117>

Jacelon, C. S., & O'Dell, K. K. (2005a). Analyzing qualitative data. *Urologic Nursing*, 25(3), 217–220. <https://www.sun.org/unj>

- Jacelon, C. S., & O'Dell, K. K. (2005b). Case and grounded theory as qualitative research methods. *Urologic Nursing*, 25(1), 49–52. <https://www.sunat.org/unj>
- Johnson, R.D., Alvarez, P., Longerbeam, S., Soldner, M., Inkeles, K. K., Leonard B. J., & Rowan-Kenyon, H. (2007). Examining sense of belonging among first-year undergraduates from different racial/ethnic groups. Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/151422178.pdf>
- Kauffman, G. (2016, November 9). Embattled Joe Arpaio will no longer be sheriff of Maricopa County. *Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2016/1109/After-six-terms-as-Arizona-s-enforcer-sheriff-Joe-Arpaio-loses-to-Democrat>
- Kim, C. (2013). Lost American DREAM of undocumented students: Understanding the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act. *Children & Schools*, 35(1), 55–58. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cds041>
- Kurtz-Costes, B., & Pungello, E. (2000). Acculturation and immigrant children: Implications for educators. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00649>
- Lee, J. M., Jr., & Ransom, T. (2011). *The educational experience of young men of color: A review of research, pathways and progress*. College Board Advocacy & Policy Center. <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/advocacy/nosca/nosca-educational-experience-young-men-color-research.pdf>
- Lopez, G., & Patten, E. (2015, September 15). The impact of slowing immigration: Foreign-born share falls among 14 largest U.S. Hispanic groups. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: <https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=19650>

- Loveland, E. (2018). Creating a sense of community and belonging for Latinx students. *Journal of College Admission*, 241, 44–49. <https://www.nacacnet.org/news--publications/journal-of-college-admission/>
- Maestas, R., Vaquera, g.S. & Zehr, L.M. (2007). Factors impacting sense of belonging at a Hispanic-serving institution. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 6(2), 237-256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192707302801>
- Martinez-Pons, M., & Zimmerman, B. J. (1990). Differences in home educational processes and academic achievement among three Hispanic groups in the U.S. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED328646>
- Morris, C. (2017). Community colleges working around state budget cuts. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, 34(9), 6-8. <https://diverseeducation.com/article/96304/>
- Muñoz, S. M., Vigil, D., Jach, E., & Rodriguez-Gutierrez, M. (2018). Unpacking resilience and trauma: Examining the “Trump Effect” in higher education for undocumented Latinx college students. *AMAE Journal*, 12(3), 33–52. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1200611>
- Museus, D. S., & Maramba, D. C. (2011). The impact of culture on Filipino American students' sense of belonging. *The Review of Higher Education*, 34(2), 231–258. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2010.0022>
- Museus, D. S., Yi, V., & Saelua, N. (2017). How culturally engaging campus environments influence sense of belonging in college: An examination of differences between white students and students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 11(4), 467–483. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000069>

- Nessas, D., Wood, T. C., & Woods, M. L. (2014). A practice in solidarity: A U.S. perspective on Cuban higher education. *International Educator*, 23(6), 48–51.
<https://www.nafsa.org/professional-resources/publications/international-educator-november-december-2014>
- Ortman, J. (1995). *Commuter students in colleges and universities*.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED398779>
- Parker, K., Horowitz-Menacse, J., Morin, R., & Lopez, M. (2015). Chapter 7: The many dimensions of Hispanic racial identity. In *Multiracial in America: Proud, diverse and growing in numbers*. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/06/11/chapter-7-the-many-dimensions-of-hispanic-racial-identity/>
- Perl, E. J., & Noldon, D. F. (2000). Overview of student affairs research methods: Qualitative and quantitative. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2000(108), 37. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.10803>
- Rodriguez, C., Parrish, J., & Parks, R. (2017). Unseen differences: Cultural diversity among Hispanic and Latino students. *College and University*, 92(3), 14–26.
<http://www4.aacrao.org/C&U/9203/#14>
- Rendón, L. I., Jalomo, R. E., & Nora, A. (2000). Theoretical considerations in the study of minority student retention in higher education. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 127-156). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Ryan, C. L., Bauman, K., (2016). *Educational attainment in the United States: 2015*. U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.html>

- Salinas, C., Malavé, R., Torrens, O. D., & Swingle, E. C. (2019). “It is who we are. We are undocumented”: The narrative of two undocumented Latino male students attending a community college. *Community College Review*, 47(3), 295–317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552119850888>
- Santiago, D. (2006). *Inventing Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs): The basics*. Excelencia in Education. <https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/issue-briefs/inventing-hispanic-serving-institutions-basics>
- Santiago, D. A., Taylor, M., Galdeano, E. C. (2016). *From capacity to success: HSIs, Title V, and Latino students*. Excelencia in Education. <https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/publications/capacity-success-hsis-title-v-and-latino-students>
- Schwartz, S. J., Waterman, A. S., Umaña, T. A. J., Lee, R. M., Kim, S. Y., Vazsonyi, A. T., ... Williams, M. K. (2013). Acculturation and well-being among college students from immigrant families. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69(4), 298–318. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21847S>
- Stebleton, M. J., Huesman Jr, R. L., & Kuzhabekova, A. (2010). Do I belong here? Exploring immigrant college student responses on the SERU survey sense of belonging/satisfaction factor. https://cshe.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/publications/rops.stebleton_et_al.immi_grantstudents.9.14.10.pdf
- Szelényi, K., & Chang, J. C. (2002). ERIC Review: Educating immigrants: The community college role. *Community College Review*, 30(2), 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009155210203000204>

- Tierney, W. (1992). An anthropological analysis of student participation in college. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 63(6), 603–618
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.1992.11778391>
- Trites, D., & Weegar, T. (2003). Shared leadership: Bringing community colleges to the people. *Community College Enterprise*, 9(2), 39–48.
<https://www.schoolcraft.edu/cce/search-archives/125>
- University Center for the Advancement of Teaching, The Ohio State University. (2019). *Sense of belonging in the college classroom*. <https://ucat.osu.edu/bookshelf/teaching-topics/shaping-a-positive-learning-environment/sense-of-belonging-in-the-college-classroom/>
- Vázquez-Montilla, E., Reyes-Blanes, M. E., Hyun, E., & Brovelli, E. (2000). Practices for culturally responsive interviews and research with Hispanic families. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 2(3), 3–7. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327892MCP0203_02
- Wang, S. C., Schwartz, S. J., & Zamboanga, B. L. (2010). Acculturative stress among Cuban American college students: Exploring the mediating pathways between acculturation and psychosocial functioning. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40(11), 2862–2887. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00684.x>
- Williams, C. L., & Berry, J. W. (1991). Primary prevention of acculturative stress among refugees: Application of psychological theory and practice. *American Psychologist*, 46(6), 632–641. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.46.6.632>

- Wojtkiewicz, R.A., & Donato, K.M. (1995). Hispanic educational attainment: The effects of family background and nativity. *Social Forces*, 74(2), 559–574.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2580492>
- Wood, J. L., Vasquez Urias, M., & Harris, F. (2016). Establishing a research center: The minority male community college collaborative (M2C3). *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2015 (168), 65-77. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.20161>
- Wolcott, H.F. (1994) *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Yin, R. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage Publications.

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Interview

My name is Raquel Cotuno and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, “Sense of Belonging among Foreign-Born and U.S.-Born Latinx Subgroups at an Illinois Community College”, occurring from November 21, 2019 to February 17, 2020. The purpose of this study is to explore sense of belonging among Latinx, foreign-born and U.S.-born students enrolled at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution community college. The definition of sense of belonging at this time, is defined as, at the most basic level, whether or not students feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, included, and that they matter, in the classroom, at college, or in their chosen career path (Strayhorn, 2012). This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Raquel Cotuno, doctoral student at National Louis University, Chicago.

Participation in this study will include:

- 1 individual interview scheduled at your convenience in the fall of the 2019-20 academic year.
- Interviews will last up to 45 min. and include approximately 17 questions to understand your experience on this campus and how you describe feeling of belonging through the lens of either a foreign-born Latinx student or a U.S.-born Latinx student.

- Interviews will be recorded and participants may view and have final approval on the content of interview transcripts

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences, and employed to inform coaching practices at community colleges but participants' identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and in aggregate format and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). To ensure confidentiality the researcher will secure recordings, transcripts, and field notes in a locked cabinet in her home office. Only Raquel Cotuno will have access to data.

Potential risks that may arise from participating in this study include possible emotional feelings during the interview when asked personal questions, but no greater than that encountered in daily life. In order to lessen the risk of emotional distress, the participant may request to skip the question or may request to speak with an on-campus counselor. The anticipated benefit of participation is the opportunity to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the experience in this educational setting and to contribute to the literature of sense of belonging among Latinx students.

Upon request you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher at raquelcotuno@triton.edu to request results from this study.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher's email.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that has not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Dr. Jamal Scott the student's faculty

chair at jscott51@nl.edu, chairs of NLU's Institutional Research Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth; email: Shaunti.Knauth@nl.edu; phone: (312) 261-3526; or Dr. Kathleen Cornett; email:

kcornett@nl.edu; phone: (844) 380-5001. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study "Sense of Belonging among Foreign-Born and U.S.-Born Latinx Subgroups at an Illinois Community College". My participation will consist of the activities below during November 21, 2019 to February 17, 2020 time period:

- 1 interview lasting approximately 45 minutes.

Participant's Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

Appendix B: Permission to Recruit

RE: Permission to Recruit Participants for my Research Study

Dear Faculty/ Club Chair,

My name is Raquel Cotuno and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am writing to request permission to present my research study recruitment speech during your class or club within the timeframe of November 21, 2019 to February 17, 2020.

My recruitment speech will contain information about the purpose of my study and further details about the study. I will pass out the informed consent and interview questions which details all information about the study. Students can then email me after class if they wish to participate. Students' names will remain anonymous for the study.

For your reference, the purpose of my study is to explore sense of belonging among Latinx, foreign-born and U.S.-born students enrolled at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution community college. This study aims to explore the relationship between sense of belonging and country-of-origin and how sense of belonging affects academic achievement among different Latinx subgroups.

I am seeking twelve Latinx students (foreign-born and U.S.-born) from the College to complete a 45-minute interview with me in my office located in E-317. Students may reach out to me by email after class at Rmongel@my.nl.edu if they wish to participate. Students can participate until February 17, 2020.

Interested students, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to sign and return to the primary researcher at the beginning of the interview process. Once the consent is signed, they will complete a demographic survey and a 45 minute interview.

Your approval to conduct this study in your classroom or club will be greatly appreciated. You may contact me at my email address Rmongel@my.nl.edu if you have any questions.

If you agree, kindly sign below acknowledging your consent and permission for me to recruit students from your classroom or club.

Faculty/Chair Signature Date

Raquel Cotuno

National Louis University, Chicago
P (708) 456-0300 Ext. 3027
C (630) 818-5968 Rmongel@my.nl.edu

Appendix C: Demographic Information Survey

1. Full Name:
2. Pseudonym:
3. Race/Ethnicity:
4. Country of Birth:
5. Age:
6. Gender:
7. Time spent at the community college:
8. Foreign-Born students: At what age did you move to the U.S.?
9. Do you speak Spanish? Yes or No
10. Are you involved in student clubs or organizations? Yes or No. If yes, which one?
11. What cultural events/activities do you celebrate with your family and friends?
12. Are you employed FT or PT?
13. Are you a parent?
14. Are you a first-generation student?
15. What is your GPA?

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Foreign-Born Student Questions:

Sense of belonging is defined as, at the most basic level, whether or not students feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, included, and that they matter, in the classroom, at college, or in their chosen career path (Strayhorn, 2012).

1. Based on the definition of sense of belonging, describe a time when you felt a sense of belonging here at this college?
2. If any, describe a time when you didn't feel welcome at this college?
3. This community college is designated a Hispanic Serving Institution, which means that the college enrolls over 25% Latinx students. It also means that the college qualifies to apply for grants from the federal government to educate the Latinx population. In your observation and experience, how does the campus support the Latinx population?
4. Tell me about the time you and your family moved to the United States? Describe your experience with living arrangements, employment, enrolling in school, and making friends.
5. Describe your first semester in college? (i.e. when you first walked on this campus, faculty, attending class, college environments, services etc..)
6. Who or what motivated you to go to college?
7. How would you describe your family support in relation to you going to college?
8. How would you describe your culture?
9. A lot of the research studies today tend to group all Latinx together and make generalizations about the population. How do you feel about researchers grouping all people from 14 different countries together?

10. Do you feel like you share the same culture and beliefs as other Latinx groups? If yes, how? If not, how so?
11. What differences do you notice in your own ethnicity and those of other Latinx ethnicities?
12. Describe any barriers you have faced being a foreign-born student studying in the U.S.?
13. What is your experience with instructors in the classroom? Do you feel like you belong?
14. What recommendations do you have for college administrators to make students feel welcome as they walk on this college campus?
15. What do you feel contributes to your educational success as a student on this campus?
16. How do you define sense of belonging?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share with me sense of belonging on this campus?

Appendix E: U.S.-Born Student Questions

Sense of belonging is defined as, at the most basic level, whether or not students feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, included, and that they matter, in the classroom, at college, or in their chosen career path (Strayhorn, 2012).

1. Based on the definition of sense of belonging, describe a time when you felt a sense of belonging here at this college?
2. If any, describe a time when you didn't feel welcome at this college?
3. This community college is designated a Hispanic Serving Institution, which means that the college enrolls over 25% Latinx students. It also means that the college qualifies to apply for grants from the federal government to educate the Latinx population. In your observation and experience, how does the campus support the Latinx population?
4. Describe your first semester in college? (i.e. when you first walked on this campus, faculty, attending class, college environments, services etc..)
5. Who or what motivated you to go to college?
6. How would you describe your family support in relation to you going to college?
7. How would you describe your culture?
8. A lot of the research studies today tend to group all Latinx together and make generalizations about the population. How do you feel about researchers grouping all people from 14 different countries together?
9. Do you feel like you share the same culture and beliefs as other Latinx groups? If yes, how? If not, how so?
10. Do you feel that you have any barriers to success in college?

11. What is your experience with instructors in the classroom? Do you feel like you belong?
12. What do you feel contributes to your educational success as a student on this campus?
13. How do you define sense of belonging?
14. What recommendations do you have for college administrators to make students feel welcome as they walk on this college campus?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about sense of belonging on this campus?