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Latinx College Student Sense of Belonging: The Role of Campus Subcultures

by

Crystal E. Garcia

A DISSERTATION

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Latinx College Student Sense of Belonging: The Role of Campus Subcultures

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University of Nebraska, 2017

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This qualitative, multiple case study incorporated elements of a grounded theory approach to explore the role of involvement in a particular university subculture, Latinx Greek letter organizations, in how Latinx college students develop and make meaning of their sense of belonging within predominantly White institutions. The study was guided by the following questions: (1) How do Latinx college students involved in LGLOs at PWIs experience and develop a sense of belonging? (2) What role (if any) does involvement in Latinx fraternities and sororities play in how Latinx college students experience and develop a sense of belonging at PWIs? Participants included 14 Latinx college students involved in Latinx Greek letter organizations at two large, public universities in the Midwest. Data collection involved individual level and institutional level data. Individual level data were the primarily data source and included a demographic survey in addition to a set of three individual interviews using photo elicitation with each of the 14 participants. Institutional level data included institutional documents and statements as well as interviews with Greek Life staff members at participating institutions.

An exploration of participants' sense of belonging in microsystems, "the immediate, face-to-face setting in which the person exists" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p.

302), pointed to five primary characteristics of places of belonging: *where I have a role or responsibility*, *where people look like me*, *where I am valued and cared for*, *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued*, and *where I share interests or values with others*. These characteristics shaped the extent to which participants felt a sense of belonging within a given setting, which had a ripple effect on individuals' sense of belonging in other contexts. The findings of this study underscored the significance of the role of belonging in campus subcultures for Latinx college students regardless of whether individuals also felt a sense of belonging within the university as a whole, thus highlighting the significance of micro- and macro- levels of belonging in the experiences of Latinx college students. This study offers implications for research and practice based on these findings.

Dedication

To the most beautiful and inspirational person in my life, my mom: Thank you for everything, I love you.

Acknowledgements

There are many individuals that have supported my journey to this point in my educational career, as well as my work on this study, that I would like to thank. First, I would like to express my gratitude to the students and Greek life staff members who took the time to participate in this study. To the 14 Latinx students who shared their experiences with me, thank you for serving as a source of motivation and inspiration to push through this project. I am thankful for the opportunity to share your stories – stories that will contribute toward the growing body of work moving our communities toward more equitable and inclusive higher education environments.

I am also incredibly thankful for my amazing advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Niehaus. By inviting me to join you in writing a paper before my program even began and for all of the opportunities you gave me to be part of your research teams, you helped to instill a sense of confidence in my ability to do research. I appreciate that you not only brought me into the projects you were working on, but that you also treated me as a colleague, always valuing my contributions. Your continuous support and encouragement has been instrumental in my development as a higher education scholar.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Sense of Belonging

"It's a privilege to feel like you belong everywhere and you know that you can go anywhere and see people who look similar to you." (Juan)

Juan's statement underscores the roles of privilege and racial/ethnic identity in sense of belonging—"students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3)—a dynamic that has also been examined in the literature on college student experiences. Studies comparing levels of sense of belonging among racially minoritized and White students show that individuals from racially minoritized populations, including Latinxs,[1] are more likely to experience lower levels of sense of belonging than their White peers (Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, & Alvarez, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008). Students also differ by race in regard to influences that shape sense of belonging (Johnson et al., 2007), which further emphasizes the role of race and ethnicity in sense of belonging. Considering the educational disparities experienced by particular racially minoritized populations such as Latinxs (Ryan & Bauman, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014, 2015), these discrepancies in sense of belonging warrant a closer examination of influences that distinguish the experiences of students from particular racially minoritized populations, such as Latinxs, from the experiences of their White peers.

[1] Latinx(s) is used throughout this dissertation as a gender inclusive term to refer to members of the Latino/Hispanic community. A more detailed explanation is offered later in this chapter.

Why does sense of belonging matter? As a basic human need, sense of belonging can affect well-being, motivate behavior (Strayhorn, 2012), and promote positive academic outcomes for college students (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Sanchez, Colon, & Esparza, 2005). Importantly, the close ties between sense of belonging and the concepts of marginalization and mattering for college students means that sense of belonging may also be a strong indicator of inclusivity and equity on college campuses (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989). The influence of inclusive and equitable college environments on Latinx sense of belonging specifically was also underscored by findings in the literature that perceptions of a hostile climate (Nuñez, 2009), perceptions of racial-ethnic tensions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), and perceptions of a negative climate for diversity (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005) have been associated with lower levels of sense of belonging for Latinxs. Given these findings, when students lack a sense of belonging in a particular institution this could be reflective of the presence of hostile climates for diversity and indicative of the extent that institutions provide inclusive and equitable environments.

The intersecting dynamics of race/ethnicity, privilege, equity, and inclusivity in these studies call attention to the need for a critical examination of how sense of belonging manifests in the experiences of Latinx college students. As articulated by Carspecken (2012), "Critical qualitative research aims to understand itself as a practice that works with people to raise critical consciousness rather than merely describe social reality" (p. 44). Thus, critical research provides a complex understanding of how Latinx students develop a sense of belonging that may assist policymakers, practitioners, and faculty members as they develop and implement policies and initiatives to support the

academic success of Latinx students and develop more inclusive environments for all college students.

Latinx College Students

Latinxs constitute the largest ethnic or racial minority group in the United States, accounting for 17% of the total population in 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Yet in 2015, Latinxs had lower rates of educational attainment at every level from secondary education to advanced postsecondary degrees, compared to White, African American, and Asian American populations (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). In 2014, approximately 15.5% of all Latinxs age 25 years and over had completed a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree compared to 22.5% of African Americans, 36.2% of non-Hispanic Whites, and 53.9% of Asian Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Although it is important to recognize the disparities in educational attainment by the Latinx community in order to address these concerns, it is equally critical to recognize the growth in educational attainment that Latinxs have experienced over time. The number of Latinxs that completed at least a bachelor's degree grew from 10% of the population in 1988 to 15% in 2015 (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). This increase is promising, yet even though the Latinx population has made strides in overall enrollment and degree completion over the years, there is still room for further growth. This study will contribute to the conversation on how educational stakeholders can continue to support this growth in Latinx academic success by examining the role of institutional environments in relation to Latinx college student experiences, specifically through the development of a sense of belonging.

Threats to Latinx Sense of Belonging

Research focused on the role of culture and context provide some insight to how and why experiences with sense of belonging on college campuses differ for Latinxs than for their White peers. The challenges of culture and context are particularly illuminated in the literature focused on the complexities racially minoritized students face when acclimating to predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Colleges are shaped by unique institutional cultures, yet students enter these spaces with their own individual cultural backgrounds and experiences (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). As a result, when students enter college environments, conflict can arise from the differences between student culture and the dominant campus culture, an experience called cultural dissonance (Museus, 2008b). Experiences with cultural dissonance and the lack of cultural fit (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005) can pose challenges for Latinxs as they acclimate to the college environment and can influence their decisions to persist.

Racial microaggressions, "unconscious and subtle forms of racism" (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 60), may also have a part in the extent to which Latinxs feel a sense of belonging within an institution. In a qualitative study, Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) used critical race theory to examine racial microaggressions in the experiences of African American college students in large public and predominantly White research universities. The findings of the study pointed to a number of ways the participants experienced racial microaggressions in and outside of academic settings because of their racial identities. Importantly, participants described "feeling 'invisible' within the classroom setting" (p. 65) as a racial minority, experienced "low expectations" (p. 66) from faculty members and their peers, and were often segregated from other

students in the class by not being selected to work with other White students in groups. Outside of the classroom, participants described feeling "unwanted" (p. 68) in particular settings. Though this study was not focused on Latinx students, it does highlight important concerns in terms of whether racially minoritized students feel marginalized on college campuses

Although PWIs are not the only institutions that experience issues with negative campus climates, research has called attention to the particular challenges with hostile climates for diversity and racial tensions that affect students enrolled in these institutions. Through a comparison of the experiences of White students and students of Color, Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, and Oseguera (2008) found that students of Color were more likely to perceive more racial tension on campus. Increased perceptions of racial tensions is problematic because perceptions of a hostile climate (Nuñez, 2009), perceptions of racial-ethnic tensions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), and perceptions of a negative climate for diversity (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005) have all been connected to a lower sense of belonging for Latinxs.

In Hurtado and Carter's (1997) study, students that perceived racial tensions on their campus also reported lower levels of sense of belonging. Of the group of students that reported racial-ethnic tension on campus, students that were part of ethnic based student organizations experienced a more positive level of sense of belonging than those that were not. Therefore Hurtado and Carter (1997) reasoned that membership in ethnic organizations may "mediate the effect of adverse climates" (p. 335). This finding underscores the literature on campus subcultures in relation to ethnically minoritized

students and warrants a closer examination of these subcultures in relation to Latinx student sense of belonging.

Campus Subcultures

Museus and Quaye (2009) developed a set of intercultural propositions that help to explain the role of cultural experiences of racially minoritized students and the effects of such experiences on persistence. The propositions asserted that cultural dissonance is related to student departure for racially minoritized students and those that encounter higher levels of cultural dissonance "must acclimate to the dominant campus culture or establish sufficient connections with cultural agents at their institutions to persist" (Museus & Quaye, 2009, p. 82). Cultural agents can include individuals or collective groups or organizations, such as ethnic based student organizations (Museus & Quaye, 2009). Though the propositions do not explicitly discuss the relationship between these experiences and college student sense of belonging, the argument that individual and collective cultural agents can "decrease cultural dissonance and facilitate the adjustment and persistence of racial/ethnic minority students," (Museus & Quaye, 2009, p. 83) suggests that collective cultural agents can provide students a place to belong despite lacking a sense of belonging to the campus as a whole.

Another study that reflects the importance of cultural agents is Attinasi's (1989) examination of the persistence of Mexican American college students. This study shed light on an important strategy Latinx students used to navigate the complexities of a large university—"scaling down" (p. 255). Scaling down involved connecting to smaller, more manageable aspect of the campus community. Museus and Quaye's description of cultural agents and Attinasi's findings are reflective of the role of campus subcultures in

the experiences of racially minoritized college students. Kuh and Love (2000) explained that individuals encounter multiple subcultures prior to entering college including those "inextricably linked to previous experiences with families, neighborhoods, ethnic and racial groups, social classes, churches, and schools" (p. 199) as well as those within college such as "institutions, major fields, social clubs or organizations, and social-oriented affinity groups" (p. 199). Kuh and Love reasoned that because these subcultures exist, "the concept of a single dominant institutional culture…has only limited utility because it cannot account for the experiences of members of different groups, especially those that may interact frequently with multiple subcultures" (p. 199). Given this finding, it stands to reason that for some Latinx students, sense of belonging in different subcultures may in fact be more critical to their college experiences than developing a sense of belonging at the institutional level. Similar to Museus and Quaye's (2009) assertions regarding cultural agents, Attinasi's (1989) notion of scaling down served students by providing opportunities for socialization and connection to the campus within a smaller and more navigable subset of the greater institutional environment.

As previously noted, ethnic based organizations are one campus subculture that can play an important role in the experiences of Latinx college students. Specifically in terms of Latinx students, Villalpando's (2003) study of Chicana/o college students concluded that involvement in a Chicana/o peer group "reaffirmed" cultural values and provided a way for students to maintain ties to their Chicana/o communities. Similarly, Gonzalez (2002) found that Chicano organizations offered students support and "cultural nourishment" in spite of the "alienation" they felt from the greater campus community (p. 211). Furthermore, one form of ethnic based organizations—Latinx Greek letter

organizations (LGLOs)—have been shown to offer support through brotherhood and sisterhood that promotes persistence (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; S. M. Sanchez, 2011), ethnic identity development (Guardia & Evans, 2008), and leadership development (Atkinson, Dean, & Espino, 2010). The unique nature of these organizations as ethnic based organizations and Greek letter organizations in addition to the research underscoring the positive effects they have on their members distinguishes LGLOs from other campus organizations and is deserving of attention.

Purpose of the Study

The research on campus subcultures has pointed to the unique influence that groups such as ethnic based student organizations have on student success; research has yet to explore the influence of subcultures on college student sense of belonging independent of whether individuals feel a sense of belonging within the institution as a whole. Although studies focused on sense of belonging to the greater campus community (see Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Spanierman et al., 2013) provide important insight to the experiences of college students, they overlook whether student sense of belonging within campus subcultures are valuable to college student experiences regardless of whether students feel a sense of belonging toward the campus as a whole, thus limiting our understanding of how Latinx students experience and develop a sense of belonging. The degree to which students experience a sense of belonging in campus subcultures versus the greater campus community is an important distinction because the literature provides reason to believe that for some Latinx students, sense of belonging within subcultures such as LGLOs are equally or even more important than a sense of belonging to the greater campus community.

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of involvement in a particular university subculture, Latinx Greek letter organizations, in how Latinx college students develop and make meaning of their sense of belonging within PWIs. The following questions guided this research:

1. How do Latinx college students involved in LGLOs at PWIs experience and develop a sense of belonging?
2. What role (if any) does involvement in Latinx fraternities and sororities play in how Latinx college students experience and develop a sense of belonging at PWIs?

Definition of Terms

To effectively examine how Latinx college students involved in LGLOs experience and develop a sense of belonging at PWIs, a few definitions of key terms should be noted. These terms include *Latina/o, Hispanic*, and *Latinx; racially minoritized individuals*; *predominantly White institutions (PWIs)*; *sense of belonging*; *ethnic student organizations*; and *Latinx Greek letter organizations (LGLOs)*.

- There is contention regarding the use of the terms *Latina/o* and *Hispanic* and the extent to which these terms are interchangeable (Alcoff, 2005). The Office of Management and Budget (1997), which defines race and ethnicity standards for federal reports, defines Hispanic or Latino as "A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" (Categories and Definitions section, para. 5). Castellanos and Jones (2003) explained that while Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably particularly across regions, "Many groups reject the term

Hispanic because it is too broad and was given to the Latino group without consent...many have argued in history that the term Hispanic does not acknowledge the heterogeneity in the Latino group" (p. xx). In addition, rather than rely on the gendered Latina/o, the term Latinx has emerged as a gender inclusive term to refer to members of this community (Ramirez & Blay, 2016). Although some indidividuals would choose to identify in other terms, I have chosen to use Latinx as I believe it is a more inclusive option. Thus, to maintain consistency in this work, I use the term Latinx(s) in reference to members of this general population while using Latina/o when specifically referring to participants that self-identified as male or female individuals.. The term Hispanic will only be used when directly citing researchers that have used this term within their work or in occasions where participants used this term.

- *Racially minoritized individuals* is a term used in this study to identify individuals that do not identify as White or Caucasian. Sleeter (2011) defined minoritized individuals as "those who, while not necessarily in the numerical minority, have been ascribed characteristics of a minority and are treated as if their position and perspective is of less worth" (p. 1). The choice to use this term stems from my critical perspective as a researcher and calls attention to the social structures that shape racial identity.
- *Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)* are postsecondary institutions in which the enrollment of White individuals constitutes 50% or more of the student population (Brown & Dancy, 2016).

- *Sense of Belonging* is a critical focus of this study. While a number of definitions of this concept exist, this study will largely be guided by the definition proposed by Strayhorn (2012):

  > students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers). It's a cognitive evaluation that typically leads to an affective response or behavior. (p. 3)

- *Ethnic student organizations* provide a particular subculture that Latinxs can connect to within the greater campus environment. These organizations may take the form of, "fraternities and sororities open solely to membership among one racial/ ethnic group, cultural groups that celebrate one specific racial or ethnic heritage, and activist organizations that concentrate on political interests for a certain race or ethnicity" (Inkelas, 2004, p. 285).
- *Latinx Greek letter organizations (LGLOs)* are college fraternities and sororities that serve as a "catalyst for promoting Latino and Latina student success and cultural awareness" (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009, p. 104). Though these organizations were founded to support the needs of Latinx college students, their enrollment is not exclusive to Latinxs.

Methodology

I used a multiple case study methodology to obtain a deeper understanding of how contextual influences play a role in the process as Latinx students develop a sense of belonging at PWIs. Case studies are useful when attempting to uncover ways that context

plays a role in a given phenomenon, whereas a multiple case study provides added value to this particular study by recognizing multiple perspectives on the issue of interest (Creswell, 2013) and increasing the probability of producing a more complex interpretation (Merriam, 2001). I also incorporated aspects of a constructivist grounded theory approach during data analysis in an effort to maintain attention to the duality of the "creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510) and to facilitate the interpretation of participants' individual and unique construction of reality. Additionally, I used "sensitizing concepts and disciplinary perspectives" as a "place to start, not to end" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 17). Accordingly, I adopted a conceptual framework incorporating elements of Strayhorn's (2012) definition of sense of belonging, Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1997, 2005) bioecological theory of human development, and Strange and Banning's (2015) models of human environments during data analysis as a guide while remaining open to other interpretations.

Delimitations

Several important delimitations were made in order to bound the scope of this study. First, I decided to focus this study on the experiences of Latinx college student sense of belonging even though the literature points to the fact that campus subcultures may also play an important role in sense of belonging for students from other racially minoritized groups (Johnson et al., 2007). This decision was intentionally made for three reasons. First, the literature has shown that culture plays an influential role in sense of belonging and students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds have been shown to experience sense of belonging in different ways (Johnson et al., 2007). Thus, combining these individuals into one group as racially minoritized individuals would detract from

the nuances of race and ethnicity that could be illuminated through this study. Second, although a study could include an examination of multiple racial/ethnic groups simultaneously, it would substantially expand the scope of this study and possibly detract from the depth of interpretation. Third, the Latinx population faces critical disparities in educational attainment (Ryan & Bauman, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), thus deserving of an examination into ways these students' sense of belonging, and in turn, success, unfolds within the context of campus subcultures that colleges can support.

A second delimitation of this study is the focus on Latinx Greek letter organizations. While this approach was used to intentionally probe the relationship between Latinx sense of belonging and campus subcultures, it does not provide a comprehensive look at ways that different types of campus subcultures such as other forms of ethnic based organizations or general student organizations may affect Latinx sense of belonging differently. However I strategically made this choice while conceptualizing and designing this study. My first consideration was that an important component of this study is its attention to context in relation to Latinx college student sense of belonging. Campus subcultures such as ethnic based student organizations play a unique role in the experiences of Latinx college students as collective cultural agents (Museus & Quaye, 2009). LGLOs are distinctive in that they serve a dual role as ethnic based organizations and Greek letter organizations, simultaneously offering a source of brotherhood and sisterhood (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; S. M. Sanchez, 2011) while supporting ethnic identity development (Guardia & Evans, 2008). Thus the unique nature of these organizations distinguishes LGLOs from other campus organizations,

including general ethnic based groups, which is why I chose to focus on how Latinx members of LGLOs develop a sense of belonging.

A third delimitation of this study is the use of two large public four-year PWIs as the case sites rather than examining student experiences in other institutional types or sizes. PWIs were selected as a focus for two essential reasons. First, although hostile climates for diversity do not solely exist among PWIs, research has highlighted this issue within these institutional types in relation to racially minoritized students (Locks et al., 2008; Nuñez, 2009). Second, when students are situated in environments in which they feel higher levels of cultural dissonance (Museus, 2008b) or a lack of cultural fit (Gloria et al., 2005), they are more likely to face challenges adjusting to the campus environment. These experiences can reasonably be expected to play a role in the way Latinx students develop a sense of belonging. Similarly, large institutions were selected as a result of Attinasi's (1989) findings, which noted the difficulties Latinx students had while adjusting to large institutions. The need for participants in the study to "scale down" their environments connected them to campus subcultures, thus providing reason to believe that institutional size may play a role in how Latinx students develop a sense of belonging.

Finally, this study aimed to obtain a rich understanding of each case, therefore the number of individual cases was limited. While this approach provides a more complex understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by Latinxs, the results of this study are not intended to be generalized to all Latinx college student experiences. However this design decision was made intentionally to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of

Latinx sense of belonging by taking a deeper look into the individual experiences of a purposefully selected group of Latinxs.

Limitations

However carefully constructed, all research faces limitations. In this particular study, I was interested in gaining insight to how Latinx students experience and develop a sense of belonging at PWIs and accordingly selected a qualitative, interview based approach to do so. However there are disadvantages to this approach. For one, asking students to recall and reflect on past events can be problematic as individuals may not fully remember or confuse the details of their experience. Furthermore, this study will capture the participants' perspectives of their sense of belonging at a certain point of time in their college career. This is a limitation as the use of a longitudinal study could perhaps more effectively shed light on the process as students' sense of belonging changes over time. Despite the potential value that conducting a longitudinal study over the course of a students' college career could add, the reflective nature of these interviews will also produce individual constructions of reality that are valuable sources of knowledge and can still contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon in important ways.

An inherent limitation of interview-based research is a result of the fact that, "different types of questions will yield different information" (Merriam, 2009, p. 117). To minimize this limitation, I gave careful consideration and attention to the construction of my questions with a particular effort to eliminate bias in the form of leading questions. Ultimately the notion that differently phrased or focused questions can elicit different responses and, as a result, different perspectives of the phenomenon in question is a part of the research process that I recognize and accept. Regardless, the questions asked in this

study provided insight to aspects of the LGLO members' experiences that will enrich our understanding of how these students develop and experience a sense of belonging at a PWI. An additional limitation of this study stemming from the use of interviews is that the sense of comfort and trust the participants feel within an interview setting could affect the degree to which participants fully divulge the details of their experiences. I combatted this limitation by building rapport with my participants through a communicated sense of collaboration in developing meaning and understanding through the research process (Maxwell, 2013).

Chapter Summary

This chapter contained an overview of the rationale and scope of this study. In summary, sense of belonging is an important part of the adjustment of Latinx students to campus communities (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012), yet Latinxs are subject to experiencing lower levels of sense of belonging compared to their White peers (Johnson et al., 2007). The literature suggests that campus subcultures such as ethnic based student organizations can play a unique role in relation to Latinx student sense of belonging (Attinasi, 1989; Gonzalez, 2002), yet research to date has focused on the campus level rather than the value of subcultures in student sense of belonging independent of the greater campus community. Thus, this study examined how Latinx students develop a sense of belonging at PWIs with particular attention to the role of campus subcultures in this dynamic.

In chapter two I provide background for this study by describing the literature that has examined sense of belonging and the role of context and culture in relation to Latinx student experiences. I also offer details regarding studies that point to the significance of

campus subcultures such as ethnic based student organizations and LGLOs in in relation to the experiences of Latinx college students. Additionally, I provide insight to theoretical perspectives that can provide insight to how Latinxs develop a sense of belonging at PWIs in relation to context. Next, I describe the methodology for this study in chapter three including the epistemological paradigm I will approach this research with and how it has shaped decisions regarding the study's design and plan for data analysis. Chapter four provides contextual background information regarding what LGLOs are and how they function as well as individual participant stories detailing their pre-college experiences and initial college transition period. Chapter five details the findings of this study in terms of five characteristics of belonging that emerged from data analysis as well as the overall effects on participant sense of belonging. Finally, chapter six sums up with conclusions and implications for practice and research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Sense of belonging affects college student experiences and success in higher education and may be particularly influential in the experiences of students from ethnically minoritized groups such as Latinx students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). However, while researchers have primarily explored college student sense of belonging in relation to the greater campus community (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007; Nuñez, 2009), findings from studies focused on the role of culture and campus subcultures (see Museus, 2008b; Museus & Quaye, 2009) and specifically the unique experiences of Latinx college student adjustment (Attinasi, 1989; Gonzalez, 2002) provide reason to believe that subcultures may in fact be equally if not more important to Latinx college student experiences. Thus, to provide background on the complexities of Latinx college student sense of belonging, I began this literature review with a rationale for the choice to focus this dissertation on Latinx college students. I then described the significance of sense of belonging in the experiences of college students and detailed cultural and contextual influences that underscore why racially minoritized students, including Latinxs, are subject to experiencing lower levels of sense of belonging compared to their White peers. I then reviewed the literature on the relationship between sense of belonging and campus subcontexts and subcultures by highlighting the unique role of ethnic based student organizations and one particular form of ethnic based student organizations—Latinx Greek letter organizations—in terms of their potential influence in shaping Latinx college student sense of belonging. Next, I showed how studies on sense of belonging to date have yet to examine Latinx sense of belonging in light of contextual levels within the institution independent of a connection to a sense of belonging within

the college or university as a whole. Finally I identified and described two ecological theories that provide lenses to explore contextual dimensions of sense of belonging.

Latinx Students

Despite the fact that Latinxs comprise the largest minority group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), Latinx undergraduate college students persist and obtain degrees in substantially smaller numbers than their White peers. In 2014, approximately 36.2% of non-Hispanic White individuals age 25 and older completed a bachelor's degree compared to approximately 15.5% of Latinxs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Research has documented a number of challenges that Latinx college students often face when transitioning to college and navigating the college environment (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Martin & Meyer, 2010; Phinney, Campos, Kallemeyn, & Kim, 2011). However, assuming a deficit approach by focusing on what Latinxs lack in terms of the characteristics that a "successful college student" should embody ignores the fact that while many Latinx students face similar obstacles when entering college, many are still academically successful and obtain college degrees (Baker & Robnett, 2012).

Rather than viewing retention issues as student failure, researchers, policymakers, and educators should focus on students that have overcome barriers to their educational attainment and what supported the success of these individuals (Hernandez, 2000). Studies have underscored that sense of belonging is a critical part of the experiences of Latinx college students and has been connected to positive Latinx student academic outcomes (Hausmann et al., 2007; Sanchez et al., 2005). Therefore a more complex understanding of sense of belonging for these students would not only contribute to our understanding of how students experience and develop a sense of belonging on college

campuses, but would also assist researchers, administrators, and policymakers in recognizing ways to support the academic success of Latinx college students.

Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging is a useful lens for examining college student outcomes and has been utilized to explore the experiences of a number of student sub populations including commuter students (Jacoby & Garland, 2004), part-time students (Kember & Leung, 2004), and racial/ethnic minorities (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Museus & Maramba, 2011). Early research connecting the influence of college student experiences to the development of sense of belonging stemmed from Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) concept of perceived cohesion, which the authors defined as encompassing "an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feelings of morale associated with membership in the group" (p. 482). Thus perceived cohesion is partially attributed to individual perspectives of a sense of belonging to a group. Bollen and Hoyle noted that a sense of belonging is made up of cognitive and affective aspects. On the cognitive level, this includes "information about experiences with the group as a whole and with other group members," and the affective level entails "feelings that reflect the individuals' appraisal of their experiences with the group and group members" (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990, p. 483). Based on their conceptualization of perceived cohesion, the authors developed the Perceived Cohesion Scale, which included Likert scaled responses to two subscales—one measuring sense of belonging and the other measuring feelings of morale.

Following Bollen and Hoyle's work, a number of other researchers have since examined college student sense of belonging. In Strayhorn's (2012) conceptual review of

sense of belonging and its use in college student research, he contended that sense of belonging has a "reciprocal quality" in which "each member benefits from the group and the group, in a sense (no pun intended), benefits from the contributions of each member" (p. 3). After evaluating the various definitions of sense of belonging, Strayhorn (2012) offered his own definition of the term:

> students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers). It's a cognitive evaluation that typically leads to an affective response or behavior. (p. 3)

Strayhorn's definition alludes to the primary way researchers have considered sense of belonging in relation to college students—by way of exploring how sense of belonging to the campus is connected to student outcomes and by examining influences that shape a student's perceived sense of belonging within the campus community.

Through his review of the literature on sense of belonging, Strayhorn (2012) offered a list of seven essential aspects of sense of belonging:

1. Sense of belonging is a basic human need.
2. Sense of belonging is a fundamental motive, sufficient to drive human behavior.
3. Sense of belonging takes on heightened importance (a) in certain contexts… (b) at certain times…as well as (c) among certain populations.
4. Sense of belonging is related to, and seemingly a consequence of, mattering.
5. Social identities intersect and affect college students' sense of belonging.

6. Sense of belonging engenders other positive outcomes.
7. Sense of belonging must be satisfied on a continual basis and likely changes as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change. (pp. 18-22)

Each of these essential aspects of a sense of belonging plays a role in establishing the significance of the concept in relation to college student experiences by providing a foundation for understanding why sense of belonging matters and what influences may shape the development of a sense of belonging.

As reflected in both Strayhorn's (2012) definition and his fourth essential aspect of sense of belonging as described above, mattering is an essential component of sense of belonging. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) noted, "to believe that the other person cares about what we want, think, and do, or is concerned with our fate, is to matter" (p. 164). Schlossberg (1989) further explained that the sense of whether a person matters to another individual or group serves "as a motivator" (p. 9) for behavior. For example, Schlossberg (1989) noted that "adolescents and young adults with depression may rule out suicide if they feel they matter to others" (p. 9). Therefore Schlossberg (1989) reasoned that if indeed "matering is a motive and does determine behavior—we need to make sure our programs, practices, and policies are helping people feel they matter" (p. 11).

Schlossberg (1989) further asserted that mattering was a "polar theme" (p. 6) to marginality. The term "polar" essentially places mattering and marginality on opposite ends of the spectrum. As Schlossberg (1989) described, "people need to feel that they count, they belong, they matter. When this is so, they no longer feel marginal" (p. 11). Feelings of marginality are contextually driven; an individual can enter a setting and "feel

central, important" and enter another and "feel marginal" (Schlossberg, 1989, p. 7). The sense of being marginal is something that everyone may experience. However while some individuals experience temporary feelings of marginalization during transition, for others this feeling may last longer or even be a permanent state (Schlossberg, 1989). Longer or permanent states of marginalizaiton can particularly be the case "for many bicultural individuals" where "marginality is a way of life" (Schlossberg, 1989, p. 7). Yet it can also be true of any individual from a marginalized group. As Schlossberg (1989) explained, "a Hispanic student from this country feels American but also takes pride in being of Spanish descent. Each culture defines its marginal groups and designates certain groups as invisible or invalid" (p. 8). Marginality and mattering therefore may play a particularly salient role in the experiences of racially minoritized students and, in turn, can affect the extent to which an individual feels a sense of belonging.

Why Sense of Belonging is Important

Sense of belonging is a critical concept in relation to college student experiences. At its most foundational level, sense of belonging is a basic human need (Maslow, 1962; Strayhorn, 2012) and can affect individual well-being (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992; Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996). Particularly within the field of higher education, the concept is also important because of its connection to positive student academic outcomes including academic motivation, attendance, and persistence (Hausmann et al., 2007; Sanchez et al., 2005). At an institutional level, sense of belonging is important because the extent that students feel a sense of belonging is also a reflection of whether institutions are providing inclusive environments, which has important implications in terms of educational equity.

Individual Well-Being

The first essential aspect of a sense of belonging as identified above by Strayhorn (2012) underscores the significance of sense of belonging in relation to student well-being. Foundationally, the notion that sense of belonging is a basic human need was asserted within Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation. His theory postulated that once individual physiological and safety needs are met, the needs for love and belonging emerge. Failing to meet the needs of love and belonging often result in maladjustment and prevents individuals from reaching higher level needs, such as self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Additional researchers have also established the significance of sense of belonging in relation to individual well-being via mental health (Hagerty et al., 1992). Hagerty et al. (1996) conducted a study using a previously constructed sense of belonging instrument (SOBI) (see Hagerty & Patusky, 1995). Two subscales emerged from factor analysis—the SOBI-P (psychological experience) and the SOBI-A (antecedents). Results showed a significant and positive relationship between sense of belonging and higher levels of social support. In addition Hagerty et al. (1996) found that lower SOBI-P scores were connected to "loneliness, depression, and anxiety, a history of psychiatric treatment, and suicidal thinking and attempts" (Hagerty et al., 1996, p. 243). The authors additionally reported that these relationships were stronger for women than men; these findings point to the role of intersectionality of identities in shaping individual sense of belonging.

Academic Performance and Persistence

The second of Strayhorn's (2012) seven essential aspects of sense of belonging as listed above states that belonging is a fundamental motive. The notion of belonging as a motive has been supported by research highlighting the influence of sense of belonging on student academic outcomes. In a quantitative study exploring the connection between sense of belonging, academic outcomes, and gender for high school Latinxs, Sanchez, Colon, and Esparza (2005) found no significant differences by gender in sense of school belonging. However the authors did conclude that sense of belonging was a significant positive predictor of academic motivation and academic effort, while it was significant negative predictor of absenteeism. Though these findings were derived from high school aged students, the findings are still important because they point to the relationship between sense of belonging and factors that may play a role in academic success, which is an important part of the college experience.

In another study focused on academic outcomes specifically for college-level students, Hausmann et al. (2007) examined sense of belonging and its role as a predictor of intentions to persist for first-year White and African American students. The single institutional study found that initial sense of belonging (as reported at the beginning of the academic year) was not predicted by background variables including race, SAT scores, gender, or financial difficulty, but was associated with college peer-group and faculty interactions and peer and parental support. Furthermore, sense of belonging had a significant and positive relationship with students' initial intentions to persist. Although this study was limited to White and African American students, the findings echo the importance of social support to college student sense of belonging as identified by

Hagerty et al. (1996) and underscore the potential role perceived sense of belonging may have on college completion.

Creating Inclusive Environments

Importantly, whether students feel a sense of belonging on campus is also a reflection of the extent to which institutions are providing inclusive environments. Extensive research has argued the benefits of a culturally diverse campus community (see Bowman, 2010; Denson & Chang, 2009), and as a result, many colleges and universities strive to increase the enrollment of racially minoritized students. However, once students arrive to campus, their sense of belonging may be affected by whether campuses have established inclusive environments. As Museus (2008a) asserted, "administrators must consider and underscore the importance of fostering environments where students feel safe and comfortable engaging meaningfully across cultural, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, gender, and sexual orientation differences" (p. 207). Hale (2004) reiterated this point when among the best approaches to increase success rates of racially minoritized college students he added, "create a warm and hospitable environment" (p. 16). Hale's assertion implicates a critical examination of ways campus environments are and are not inclusive and whether aspects exist that prevent students from experiencing a sense of belonging.

Sense of Belonging and Racially Minoritized Students

Sense of belonging is by no means exclusively experienced by minoritized students and can play an important role in the experiences of all college students, yet findings from a number of research studies have shown that individuals from minoritized populations such as Latinxs may be more likely to experience lower levels of sense of

belonging compared to their White peers. Differences in levels of sense of belonging among different racial/ethnic groups was reflected in the studies by Johnson et al. (2007) and Strayhorn (2008). Strayhorn (2008) specifically compared levels of sense of belonging experienced by White students to Latinx students and found that Latinxs reported lower levels of sense of belonging compared to their White peers. Johnson et al.'s (2007) work compared levels of sense of belonging experienced by minoritized individuals, including Latinxs, to their White peers and found that racially minoritized individuals (Latinxs, African Americans, and Asian Pacific Americans) all experienced lower levels of sense of belonging than White students.

Strayhorn (2008) used data from the 2004-2005 administration of the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) to examine Latinx student experiences in relation to sense of belonging. The study's dependent variable was sense of belonging, operationally defined as "perceived sense of integration" (p. 303). The independent variables in this analysis consisted of academic variables including year in school, grades, transfer status, time spent studying, and working with a faculty member on research (Strayhorn, 2008). The social variables included involvement in clubs and organizations, interactions with diverse peers, working on campus, working off campus, and living on campus (Strayhorn, 2008). Control variables included age, gender, and parent's educational level (Strayhorn, 2008). Hierarchical linear modeling revealed several significant predictors of sense of belonging for Latinxs including grades, time spent studying, and interactions with peers (Strayhorn, 2008).

The findings of Johnson et al.'s (2007) quantitative study of sense of belonging within PWIs showed that racial/ethnic backgrounds not only play a role in the level that

students reported feeling a sense of belonging within the campus community, but also affected what influences shaped individual sense of belonging. The study used a sample of nearly 3,000 first year students that participated in the 2004 National Study of Living-Learning Programs. All participants within the sample were first-year students. The results illuminated significant differences between racial groups regarding their sense of belonging within the campus environment, with White students reporting the strongest sense of belonging in comparison to other racial groups. As far as influences on sense of belonging were concerned, the researchers noted that Hispanic students were the only group that encounters with other diverse students significantly predicted sense of belonging while co-curricular participation was only significantly related to sense of belonging for Asian Pacific American and White students. Interestingly, the perception of residence halls as being socially supportive was a significant indicator of sense of belonging for all students except multiracial individuals. The distinction among the extent that students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds reported a sense of belonging and the differences in the factors that were associated with these levels point to the unique role that race and ethnicity play in sense of belonging for college students.

Influence of Culture and Context on Latinx Student Sense of Belonging

Johnson et al. (2007) and Strayhorn's (2008) findings show that Latinx students may be more likely than their White peers to experience lower levels of sense of belonging and differ in how they develop a sense of belonging, thus warranting a deeper exploration as to *why* and *how* these perceptions may differ. Though not explicitly, the concepts of marginality and mattering underpin the following research, which shed light on the significance of the interaction of race, culture, and context in shaping college

student sense of belonging within the context of PWIs. Cultural dissonance (Museus, 2008a), cultural fit (Gloria et al., 2005), cultural suicide (Museus & Maramba, 2011), and hostile climates for diversity (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nuñez, 2009) are among the challenges racially minoritized students may experience as they transition to a predominantly White institution. These studies share a commonality in that they all call attention to dimensions of instititutional environments that may play a role in the extent that stuents feel marginalized, and ultimately whether they feel a sense of belonging within their campus environment. The following section will provide an overview of these studies with particular attention to those focused on Latinx student sense of belonging.

The Role of Culture

Research that highlights the interaction of culture and context provides some insight for understanding how and why students from racially minoritized backgrounds face challenges developing a sense of belonging within PWIs. Campus environments are shaped by institutional culture, which Kuh and Whitt (1988) described as a process and product. Culture is a process in that it is constantly exposed to change, and it is also as a product reflected in "interactions among history, traditions, organizational structures, and the behavior of current students, faculty, and staff" (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. iv). Culture is evident through artifacts and the "espoused and enacted values and the core beliefs and assumptions shared by institutional leaders, faculty, students, and other constituents, such as alumni and parents" (p. iv).

The concept of cultural dissonance helps to describe the gap between student and institutional culture and, in turn, how that gap influences student experiences. Cultural

dissonance is “conflict or tension perceived and experienced by an individual as a result of inconsistencies between that individual’s cultural habitus and newly encountered culturally-specific information and experiences” (Museus, 2008a, p. 217). Cultural dissonance therefore may be experienced by all entering college students, but particularly so for students from minoritized backgrounds. Cultural dissonance emerges when students encounter unfamiliar cultural environments within a college or university, therefore Museus (2008a) further explained that

> if the predominantly White cultures of a campus perpetuate values, beliefs, perspectives, and assumptions that are drastically incongruent with the precollege cultures of racial/ethnic minority students, the result can be a noticeably high level of cognitive dissonance among those minority students. (p. 217)

Cultural dissonance functions as an added stressor as college students navigate campus environments and may serve as an obstacle to student persistence (Museus & Quaye, 2009). The concept of cultural dissonance offers some insight to the challenges Latinx students may face when immersed in a culture different than their own.

A separate but closely related concept, cultural fit, has been also been connected to the experiences of Latinx college students and can play a role in student sense of belonging. Gloria, Castellanos, and Orozco (2005) examined the psychological well-being of Latina undergraduate students and its relationship with the perception of educational barriers, cultural fit, and coping responses. The authors operationalized cultural fit using the Cultural Congruity Scale that measures “students’ perceptions of cultural congruity or cultural fit between the values of the university and their personal values” (Gloria et al., 2005, p. 168). The findings showed that cultural congruity was a

significant and positive predictor of psychological well-being. Results also indicated a correlation between higher levels of cultural congruity and the perception of fewer educational barriers that would influence college departure.

One study by Museus and Maramba (2011) offered insight to the role of culture in relation to sense of belonging for minoritized students enrolled in a PWI. The study examined the experiences of Filipino American college students as they adjusted to the college environment specifically by examining the extent that students felt the need to abandon ties to their own cultural identities and adopt aspects of the dominant culture in relation to the students' perceived sense of belonging (Museus & Maramba, 2011)**.** The theoretical model included two independent variables—pressure to commit cultural suicide and connections to cultural heritage. Pressure to commit cultural suicide was described as the pressure experienced by students to "sever ties with their cultural heritage or their cultural identities and conform to their campus cultures" (Museus & Maramba, 2011, p. 242). Commitment to cultural heritage on the other hand was the degree to which students "maintained connections to their cultural heritages" (Museus & Maramba, 2011, p. 242).

Museus and Maramba (2011) used sense of belonging as the dependent variable while ease of cultural adjustment served as a mediating variable. The choice to include these variables was based on the hypothesis that pressure to commit cultural suicide and connections to cultural heritage would directly affect students's ease in culturally adjusting to the campus environment, which would then directly affect sense of belonging. After controlling for several other variables including gender, age, generation, year in college, and GPA, results of the structural equation model showed that ease of

cultural adjustment had a significant direct positive effect on sense of belonging. These findings meant that when students experienced greater ease culturally adjusting to the campus environment, they also reported higher levels of sense of belonging. Meanwhile, pressure to commit cultural suicide had a significant direct negative relationship with ease of cultural adjustment. Therefore, pressure to abandon individual cultural ties negatively affected ease of cultural adjustment and in turn, indirectly affected sense of belonging. Connection to cultural heritage had a significant positive effect on ease of cultural adjustment. The effect between the two variables meant that when students maintained ties to their cultural heritage, they experienced more positive effects on ease of cultural adjustment, which then indirectly affected sense of belonging. These findings point to the important role culture plays in college transitions for racially minoritized students. Though this study was focused on the experiences of Filipino American college students, it still has important implications for Latinx sense of belonging in regard to the role of culture and specifically the potential for pressure to abandon their cultural connections in place of those of the dominant campus culture.

The Role of Hostile Climates and Racial Tensions

In a study of the experiences of students attending PWIs, Locks et al. (2008) provided insight into ways that race and college context play a role in sense of belonging for minoritized students. The quantitative study examined college student transitions using sense of belonging as the primary dependent variable of the model. The model additionally included four endogenous variables—perceptions of racial tension, frequency of positive interactions with diverse peers, frequency of anxious interactions with diverse peers, and a measure of student predisposition to participate in diversity-

related college activities—and four exogenous variables—diversity in students' precollege environment, living with parents during the second year, gender, and hours students socialized each week.

There were several notable direct effects within the model, including a higher sense of belonging as a direct effect of frequent positive interactions with diverse peers and increased time spent socializing (Locks et al., 2008). Perceptions of racial tension on campus had direct negative effects on sense of belonging. Indirectly, time spent socializing positively affected sense of belonging through a mediated relationship with positive interactions with diverse peers. Anxious interactions with diverse peers negatively effected sense of belonging and was mediated by perceptions of racial tension on campus. One important limitation of this study was that Latinx students were combined with Asian American and African American students to form a student of Color group. Parsing these students out to explore the unique nature of each racial group would provide a deeper understanding of the role of race and culture in the way students from particular minoritized populations experience a sense of belonging.

Though hostile climates for diversity and racial tensions are not exclusively materialized within PWIs, these are notable aspects of campus environments that have been connected to lower levels of sense of belonging for racially minoritized students within PWIs. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999) defined campus climate "as the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members" (p. iii). The authors further explained that campus climate for racial and ethnic diversity "is linked with a historical legacy of exclusion at the institution, its structural diversity, and behaviors on campus that include interactions inside and outside

the classroom" (p. iii). Thus, Hurtado et al. (1999) offered a model for diverse learning environments and later a revised version of the model (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012) that accounted for the micro- and maco- contextual levels of institutional environments. The revised model was renamed the Multicontextual Model for Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) and identified components of campus environments that play a role in the cultivation of diverse learning environments. Importantly the DLE model underscored the role of environmental elements beyond compositional diversity, as reflected by the number of racially minoritized students in a given campus, in developing inclusive learning environments (Hurtado et al., 2012).

Three notable studies have specifically examined Latinx student sense of belonging in relation to hostile climates. Findings from Hurtado and Carter's (1997) study for instance spoke to the significance of adjustment in relation to Latinx student experiences and additionally highlighted its implications for the perception of hostile climates. Building from theory on student integration in addition to Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) Sense of Belonging subscale within the Perceived Cohesion Scale, Hurtado and Carter (1997) tested a path model of the relationship between Latinx student sense of belonging and "students' background characteristics (gender and academic self-concept), measured prior to college entry; college selectivity; ease in transition to college in the first year; and perceptions of a hostile racial climate in the second year" (p. 330). The results of the structural equation model analysis indicated that ease in transition directly and negatively effected student perceptions of a hostile climate, meaning that the more positive students' experiences were transitioning to college, the less likely they were to experience a hostile campus climate. The factor, perceptions of a hostile climate, had a

negative and direct effect on sense of belonging. Therefore, ease of transition indirectly yet positively affected sense of belonging through perceptions of a hostile climate.

The role of student experiences on campus in relation to hostile climates for diversity, specifically for Latinxs whose primary home language was Spanish, was evident again in a study by Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005). This study examined the educational experiences of Latinxs and their perceptions of campus climate and sense of belonging. Results of the study showed that students that spoke Spanish at home had higher perceptions of a hostile climate for diversity than those who mainly spoke English. The authors reasoned that this highlighted the influence of maintaining close cultural ties on campus experiences. However, there were no other background characteristics that had significant effects on student perceptions, thus experiences in college seemed to play a larger role in shaping these perceptions. Results also showed that positive interactions with diverse peers was connected to higher perceptions of sense of belonging, whereas negative climate for diversity was associated with lower levels of sense of belonging.

Similarly, Nuñez's (2009) quantitative study of Latinx students' sense of belonging at 4-year public research institutions also highlighted the role of hostile environments in relation to sense of belonging. The study employed structural equation modeling to examine the relationship between the dependent variable in this study, sense of belonging, and several variables that represented the constructs for social capital (anticipated ease navigating around campus, giving back to community, faculty interest in development, community service, second-generation immigrant status, participation in class discussion), intercultural capital (positive cross-racial interactions, diversity curriculum), financial capital (hours worked per week), and hostile campus climate

(perception of hostile climate). The results indicated that perceptions of a hostile climate had a negative direct effect on sense of belonging. Nuñez (2009) also identified several other factors that had a significant, positive direct effect on sense of belonging including faculty interest, positive cross-racial interactions, and obligation to give back to the community. Community service participation and class participation had indirect, yet positive effects on sense of belonging.

Interestingly three of these studies reported unexpected relationships that underscored the notion that a heightened sense of cultural awareness and/or engagement in diverse interactions or diversity focused experiences may result in a stronger sensitivity to negative racial experiences on campus. For example, the study by Locks et al. (2008) found that stronger precollege predispositions to engage in diversity activities had direct positive effects on perceived racial tension for minoritized students as well as their White peers. Similar findings were reported in two of the studies focused on Latinx students. In Hurtado and Ponjuan's (2005) study, students were more likely to describe experiencing hostile climates for diversity when they also engaged in diversity co-curricular programs and experienced relatively positive interactions with diverse peers. Furthermore, Nuñez (2009) found that even when Latinx students reported higher levels of sense of belonging, those that had "more familiarity with diversity issues and report more social and academic connection and engagement" (p. 41) were still more likely to report experiences with hostile campus climates.

These are seemingly contradictory results when juxtaposed to findings that conclude perceptions of a hostile campus climate for diversity negatively affect sense of belonging. Yet it still remained the case that "for Latino students, higher levels of

positive diversity experiences, community involvement, and academic engagement can be positively associated with perceptions of a hostile climate at the same time as with a sense of belonging" (Nuñez, 2009, p. 58). These findings point to the complexity in how Latinx students develop a sense of belonging and also raise the question of whether other influences are mediating the effects of hostile climates, a possibility that was reflected in Hurtado and Carter's (1997) findings.

An additional component of Hurtado and Carter's (1997) results showed that students that reported racial tensions on their campus experienced lower sense of belonging. Furthermore, of the individuals that perceived racial-ethnic tension, students involved in ethnic student groups reported higher levels of sense of belonging than students not involved in such organizations. Thus, Hurtado and Carter (1997) reasoned that being part of racial-ethnic organizations "may also mediate the effect of adverse climates" (p. 335). The possible role of ethnic based organizations in mediating effects of adverse climates as identified by Hurtado and Carter warrants a closer examination of these subcultures in relation to Latinx student sense of belonging.

Campus Subcultures

Within college and university culture are student subcultures that are developed through peer interactions and "maintained through ceremonies and rituals" in addition to "formal and informal mechanisms of social control" (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 87). Subcultures are characterized by "values and behavioral norms" passed down by generations of students and are shaped by institutional context (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 87). Research regarding student adjustment and campus subcultures provide some insight to how these dynamics may relate to college student sense of belonging. Students from

backgrounds that differ significantly from the dominant campus culture, such as ethnically minoritized individuals, face unique challenges to developing a sense of belonging within the campus community (Museus, 2008a; Museus & Quaye, 2009). However, campus subcultures may facilitate the development of a sense of belonging for minoritized students. Although not directly linked to sense of belonging, the cultural propositions developed by Kuh and Love (2000) and the subsequent intercultural propositions created by Museus and Quaye (2009) highlight the critical role ethnic based organizations can play in Latinx college student experiences.

In recognition of the influence of culture on college student experiences, Kuh and Love (2000) developed the following set of cultural propositions regarding the college student experience and student departure:

1. The college experience, including a decision to leave college, is mediated through a student's cultural meaning-making system.
2. One's cultures of origin mediate the importance attached to attending college and earning a college degree.
3. Knowledge of a student's cultures of origin and the cultures of immersion is needed to understand a student's ability to successfully negotiate the institution's cultural milieu.
4. The probability of persistence is inversely related to the cultural distance between a student's culture(s) of origin and the cultures of immersion.
5. Students who traverse a long cultural distance must become acclimated to dominant cultures of immersion or join one or more enclaves.

6. The amount of time a student spends in one's cultures of origin after matriculating is positively related to cultural stress and reduces the chances they will persist.
7. The likelihood a student will persist is related to the extensity and intensity of one's sociocultural connections to the academic program and to affinity groups.
8. Students who belong to one or more enclaves in the cultures of immersion are more likely to persist, especially if group members value achievement and persistence. (p. 201)

Notable within these propositions was the concept of cultural distance—the distance between the students' "culture of origin" and "the institutions' values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and expectations" (Kuh & Love, 2000, p. 204). Kuh and Love (2000) further described that traveling cultural distance may be "arduous, threatening, and intimidating" (p. 204). The fifth of Kuh and Love's cultural propositions asserted the critical role of cultural enclaves in relation to the success of students from cultural backgrounds that are significantly divergent from the campus culture. Though Kuh and Love's work implicated the significance of campus subcultures in relation to college student persistence, the connection of the cultural propositions with the adjustment process is not too far from ways students develop a sense of belonging. Therefore given Kuh and Love's propositions, one could reason that ethnic student organizations may play an important role in Latinx student sense of belonging.

In a broad study of how culture played a role in the college experiences of racial/ethnic minority students attending a predominantly White institution, Museus and

Quaye (2009) qualitatively examined and modified Kuh and Love's cultural propositions, resulting in eight newly revised intercultural propositions as follows,

1. Minority students' college experiences are shaped by their cultural meaning-making systems.
2. Minority students' cultures of origin moderate the meanings that they attach to college attendance, engagement, and completion.
3. Knowledge of minority students' cultures of origin and immersion are required to understand those students' abilities to negotiate their respective campus cultural milieus.
4. Cultural dissonance is inversely related to minority students' persistence.
5. Minority students who experience a substantial amount of cultural dissonance must acclimate to the dominant campus culture or establish sufficient connections with cultural agents at their institution to persist.
6. The degree to which campus cultural agents validate minority students' cultures of origin is positively associated with reduced cultural dissonance and greater likelihood of persistence.
7. The quality and quantity of minority students' connections with various cultural agents on their respective campuses is positively associated with their likelihood of persistence.
8. Minority students are more likely to persist if the cultural agents to whom they are connected emphasize educational achievement, value educational attainment, and validate their traditional cultural heritages. (pp. 77-87)

While three of the new intercultural propositions were similar to Kuh and Love's original cultural propositions, others including the fifth proposition were revised. Unlike Kuh and Love's version that highlighted the significance of campus enclaves, Museus and Quaye's (2009) fifth intercultural proposition highlighted the significance of cultural agents in relation to student experiences.

Museus and Quaye (2009) noted that these cultural agents could be categorized as individual or collective agents. The individual level includes faculty, staff, or other students on campus that act as "cultural translators, mediators, and models…who can help racial/ethnic minority students navigate their home and campus cultures simultaneously" (p. 72), whereas the collective level includes groups such as campus organizations or multicultural centers. The authors further explained that these collective agents may

> provide students with smaller and more manageable environments within the larger campus, offer a conduit for socialization into the larger campus community, and provide a venue in which students can maintain and express a sense of racial/ethnic identity on campus. (Museus & Quaye, 2009, p. 72)

Though not explicitly tied to sense of belonging, this proposition asserts that cultural agents can assist racially minoritized college students as they navigate college environments and maintain a connection to their cultural backgrounds. Though the proposition noted that cultural agents can serve to conjoin students to the greater campus environment, it is reasonable to consider that these campus subcultures offer value to student experiences in and of themselves regardless of their effect on student ties to the campus as a whole. The rationale for the argument of the value of campus subcultures

underscores the possibility that a student could develop a sense of belonging within a campus subculture without feeling a sense of belonging to the campus as a whole. Though this distinction may seem like a matter of semantics, there is a critical distinction and warrants further investigation.

Both Kuh and Love (2000) and Museus and Quaye's (2009) cultural and intercultural propositions share the commonality that they implicate the importance of campus subcultures in relation to the experiences of minoritized college students. Other empirical research also provides insight to the significance of subcultures to the experiences of minoritized individuals and specifically Latinx college students. In Attinasi's (1989) qualitative study of the persistence decisions of Mexican American college students, for instance, participants described their early perceptions of a sense of "bigness" (p. 262) in relation to the complexity of the social, physical, and academic geography of the institution. One strategy participants used to navigate these geographies was by "scaling down" (p. 263) the campus into less complex spaces by "majoring in" or averting the "'biggest places' on campus" (p. 264), in favor of smaller, more navigable spaces they could connect to. The phenomenon of scaling down highlights the notion that an individual may connect to campus subcultures as a means of more effectively navigating the college experience and, in turn, may feel a sense of belonging within the campus subculture without feeling a sense of belonging to the overall campus environment. The findings of Attinasi's study raise the question of whether a sense of belonging on the campus as a whole is as critical to the experiences of Latinx students as a sense of belonging to a subculture of the institution such as a campus organization or department.

Ethnic Based Organizations

Ethnically based student organizations are a particular campus subculture that have been examined in the literature (Inkelas, 2004; Museus, 2008b). Ethnic student organizations may take the form of "fraternities and sororities open solely to membership among one racial/ ethnic group, cultural groups that celebrate one specific racial or ethnic heritage, and activist organizations that concentrate on political interests for a certain race or ethnicity" (Inkelas, 2004, p. 285). Studying the experiences of students in ethnic based organizations can provide a better understanding of the role of subcultures in relation to student experiences with sense of belonging, particularly because of the social and cultural dimensions they embody. The literature gives cause for examining the significance of sense of belonging within campus subcultures in the experiences of Latinx college students, however not all research has pointed to positive effects of ethnic student organizations on student experiences and perceptions. Before presenting research that calls attention to the positive effects of ethnic based organizations in Latinx college experiences, this section will first address the literature that points to negative effects of these organizations.

Negative effects of ethnic based organizations. Ethnic based organizations have been critiqued as serving as ethnic enclaves that prevent cross-cultural interactions with members of other racial/ethnic groups (D'Souza, 1991; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). Some researchers have argued the notion that racial balkanization, a tendency for minority students to self-segregate into their respective racial groups, creates negative effects on various cognitive and affective outcomes for minority students (D'Souza, 1991; Sidanius et al., 2004). Sidanius et al. (2004) for instance longitudinally

explored the effects of ethnic and Greek organizational involvement on student perceptions toward four clusters of intergroup attitudes including: racial policy attitudes, social identity attitudes, ethnic prejudice, and perceived group conflict. The study involved five waves of data collection, with the first occurring during orientation prior to the start of students' freshman year and the last occurring during students' senior year. Sense of belonging was measured within the social identity attitudes cluster using two questions—"How often do you think of yourself as a UCLA student?" and "To what degree do you experience a sense of belonging or a sense of exclusion at UCLA?" (Sidanius et al., 2004, p. 99).

The results showed that as student perceptions of themselves as UCLA students increased, they were more likely to join an ethnic student organization, yet the findings did not indicate a relationship between involvement in ethnic organizations and an increased sense of belonging to the campus or greater levels of perceived common in-group identity with other campus organizations. Involvement in ethnic organizations had significant, positive effects on an increased sense of ethnic victimization, increased ethnic identity, increased ethnic activism, and increased perception of zero-sum conflict between ethnic groups. The findings also showed that ethnic organization involvement was associated with an increased perception that ethnic based organizations promoted separatism. Thus, the researchers concluded that the role of ethnic based student organizations aligned more closely with a social identity perspective than a multiculturalism perspective and that these organizations acted as "ethnic enclaves for minority students"; similarly "sororities and fraternities tend to serve as ethnic enclaves for White students" (Sidanius et al., 2004, p. 100).

These findings somewhat align with those reported by Park (2014), yet slightly differ in relation to Latinxs. Park (2014) sought to explore how student organizations influenced interracial friendships using the responses of over 3,000 students that completed the National Longitudinal Study of Freshmen (NLSF). The dependent variable—interracial friendship—was dichotomously coded based on whether the student reported they had "at least one friend of another race or ethnicity" (p. 649). Using logistic regression, Park entered background variables in the first block of model inputs followed by a block that controlled for precollege diversity experiences, a block that reflected the racial composition of the student's university and a final block that controlled for organizational type (Greek, religious, and ethnic organizations). The results of this study showed that involvement in Greek life and ethnic student organizations had a significant and negative relationship with interracial friendship. However being Latinx "had the strongest relationship with the outcome of interracial friendship" (Park, 2014, p. 654). Park's finding is notable because it shows that racial/ethnic backgrounds have an effect on the way students experience campus life. In this particular study, even though involvement in a Greek or ethnic student organizations had a negative effect on interracial friendship, being a Latinx student had a strong positive connection to interracial friendship. Thus there is reason to believe that the negative effects experienced by some students involved in ethnic based or Greek organizations may not be similarly experienced by Latinxs.

Benefits of ethnic based organizations for Latinx students. Contrary to the findings from Sidanius et al. (2004) and Park (2014), other researchers have found that ethnic based organizations actually benefit Latinx students in a number of ways. As

previously discussed, involvement in ethnic student organizations may mediate the effects of hostile climates for diversity on Latinx sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Through a counterstory constructed through the lens of critical race theory and Latinx critical theory, Villalpando (2003) illustrated the benefits Chicana/o students experienced as members of Chicana/o peer groups. Among the central findings of this study, Villalpando concluded that a major reason the participants engaged in a Chicana/o peer group "was to maintain a critical cultural consciousness" (p. 638). This critical cultural consciousness "reaffirmed for them the value of their cultural practices, beliefs, and norms as tools in their struggle for success and equity in higher education" (p. 638). Interactions with these groups also provided a means for students to remain connected to their Chicana/o communities. These findings are in clear opposition to those of Sidanius et al. (2004) that found involvement in ethnic based organizations had significant, positive effects on an increased sense of ethnic victimization and that these organizations served as ethnic enclaves for racially minoritized students. For the participants in Villalpando's (2003) study, participation in ethnic organizations provided an avenue for students to maintain ties to their cultural heritage, which positively affected their experiences rather than reinforcing separatism.

Gonzalez's (2002) qualitative study showed that ethnic based organizations could provide Latinx students a way to feel a sense of belonging despite experiencing alienation from the rest of the campus. The study of Chicano students was set at a single large predominantly White institution and sought to examine ways Chicano students experienced university culture with particular emphasis on how they interpreted the institutional culture and what aspects of the culture supported or presented challenges to

persisting (Gonzalez, 2002). Participants reported that the lack of Chicanos and any physical representation of Chicanos on campus led to feelings of "marginalization and alienation" (p. 202). One important way participants found "cultural nourishment" (p. 211) and support within the social world was through other Chicano students on campus through their involvement with a Chicano organization. The participants reflected on ways the organization offered the students a space to belong, despite the fact that they still did not feel welcomed by the greater campus community. For instance one of the participants reflected,

> When I went to my first MEChA meeting, I was blown away. I had never been in a room with so many Chicanos at the university before. I wondered where all of them had been during the day. It felt good to be in a room with so many Chicanos. I felt strong. In fact, I go every week now just because of the strength I get from being around my people. It's tough going to class and being the only Chicano. If it wasn't for MEChA, I don't know if I'd still be here. (Gonzalez, 2002, p. 211)

For these participants, involvement in an ethnic based organization was critical to their persistence and provided a sense of cultural nourishment they did not receive from the greater campus community. Therefore for some students, ascribing to and developing a sense of belonging within a smaller aspect of the campus community, such as an academic major or campus organization, can be equally if not more important than a sense of belonging to the campus as a whole.

Latinx Greek Letter Organizations

Latinx Greek letter organizations (LGLOs) are a unique form of ethnic based student organizations in that they serve a dual role as Greek letter and ethnic based

organizations. Similar to historically White Greek organizations, LGLOs have a unique culture that distinguishes these groups from other types of student organizations including the adoption of symbols such as organizational colors and mascots, secret rituals, an abidance by rules set forth by the local and national organizational governance, engagement in the campus community and philanthropic activities, and importantly a focus on the notions of brotherhood and sisterhood (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009; Torbenson, 2005). Yet these organizations have also infused culture into these rituals and practices that sets them apart from other Greek organizations.

The bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood that stem from membership in an LGLO cause the nature of these organizations to be different from other forms of ethnic student organizations, which in turn shape the experiences of members in unique ways. Moreno (2012) used Abes, Jones, and McEwen's Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity to qualitatively explore the academic experiences of Latinas in a Latina-based Greek-letter sorority at a large public research institution. Participants in the study described the development of a sisterhood that went deeper than typical friendships. The sisterhood bond was based on shared values and provided support to the participants and served as a "family away from home" (p. 46). The organization served as a means to motivate participants and learn more about their culture. The sorority also served the students in other ways by providing opportunities for leadership development, serving as an outlet for participants to promote the significance of college education to younger students, supporting academic outcomes, and as a way to gain skills in professionalism. The deep connections and family-like bonds formed within these organizations underpins the rationale that they may also serve to bolster student sense of belonging.

Historical context: Greek letter organizations. Greek fraternities and sororities experienced tremendous growth through the early 1900s that resulted in the development of national umbrella organizations to unite organizations together (Torbenson, 2005). In 1902 the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) was established, providing a national umbrella organization for sororities. Then in 1909 the National Interfraternity Conference (NIC) was created "for most of the White national fraternities" (Torbenson, 2005, p. 57). However "the black [sic] national fraternities and sororities were excluded, and in 1929, these groups organized the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) to meet their needs" (Torbenson, 2005, p. 57).

A National umbrella organization for Latinx Greek organizations, the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO), came along much later in 1998 (National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations, n.d.). Sixteen Latinx fraternities and sororities across the nation are housed within the NALFO umbrella (National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations, n.d.). Like other national umbrella organizations, NALFO was developed to unify "Latino Greek voices and provides empowerment and support to its membership" (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009, p. 116). Also in 1998, the National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) was developed to unite multicultural Greek organizations that celebrated "all cultures as their main focus, with no single culture being specifically emphasized" (National Multicultural Greek Council, 2009, para. 6).

As of 2005 there were over 200 national social fraternities and sororities—"in contrast to professional fraternities, honor societies, and recognition societies that also use Greek letters" (Torbenson, 2005, p. 37). On campuses, chapters of fraternities and

sororities are identified by their council and typically coordinate regular meetings together with other chapters in their corresponding council. For NIC, when there are "two or more NIC member fraternities on a campus," their campus councils are known as Interfraternity Council (IFC) (North-American Interfraternity Conference, 2017, para. 3). While NALFO is the most prominent national umbrella for Latinx Greek organizations, individual fraternities and sororities must make the decision to join—thus not all LGLOs are encompassed within a national umbrella organization. Therefore on campus, they are instead governed under the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) that includes other culturally based or multicultural organizations (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009). Multicultural Greek councils were selected to serve LGLOs because the MGCs provided the opportunity for organizations to connect with other culturally based Greek organizations, offered universities a platform they could use to communicate critical information to organizations, and increased the possibility for campus recognition (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009). Therefore, depending on the fraternities and sororities that are established on campus, there may be up to a total of four councils—IFC, NPC, NPHC, and MGC.

Development and purpose of Latinx Greek letter organizations. LGLOs were created in response to racial exclusion from other Greek organizations (McCabe, 2011). Fajardo (2015) provided a detailed account of the historical development of these groups and identified two different points of significance in the development of Latinx based fraternities and sororities. The first generation of these organizations were established over a hundred years ago to serve the needs of "wealthy international students" (p. 69) that traveled to the United States for their education and inevitably returned to their home countries. These organizations were political and positioned themselves as advocates for

Latin American unity against the United States. These fraternities slowly died out and were no longer active by the early 1970s.

The generation of Latinx fraternities that existed prior to the early 1970s was distinct from the generation that now exist on college campuses (Fajardo, 2015). The new generation of LGLOs stemmed from the establishment, and in some cases the re-establishment, of organizations during the 1970s (Fajardo, 2015). These organizations have their own shared culture, values, and rituals. Unlike the first generation of Latinx fraternities, the newly established organizations "focused on the empowerment of the Latino community in the United States" (Fajardo, 2015, p. 77). These organizations promoted "higher education attainment for Latinos, advocated for equal rights, and service to the community" (p. 79).

Juan Rodriguez, one of the founders of Sigma Lambda Beta, a Latinx fraternity that originated at the University of Iowa, explained that many LGLOs were developed in areas such as the Midwest and the East because of Latinx feelings of isolation on predominantly White campuses in these areas (Rodriguez, 1995). Though they were welcomed in Historically Black fraternities and sororities, Rodriguez explained that "many of the Latinos felt they wanted to contribute to their own communities" (Rodriguez, 1995, p. 26). Muñoz and Guardia (2009) described that as Lambda Theta Phi (a male LGLO) was founded in 1976, the founders were intentional about its principles. While members would be encouraged to "interact with non-Latinos in every aspect of college life: academic competitions, athletics, cultural events, social functions, and charitable endeavors" (p. 110), they were also resolute that the organization would maintain ties to their Latinx culture and would not adopt the traditions of the

predominantly White fraternities. Latinx fraternities and sororities have experienced tremendous growth over the span of a few decades (Muñoz & Guardia, 2009).

LGLOs and college student experiences. The dual role of LGLOs as ethnic and Greek organizations is an overlap that is rarely recognized in the literature. Studies typically operationalize organizational involvement using options including Greek letter organizations and ethnic based organizations separately, as opposed to one combined option of ethnic based Greek letter organizations (see Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Park, 2014). Given the unique nature of LGLOs and cultural aspects of these organizations, Museus and Quaye's (2009) seventh proposition concerning the "quality and quantity" (p. 86) of connections with cultural agents gives cause to believe that LGLOs may play a more important role in Latinx student experiences than typical student organizations. Though research on LGLOs is limited, the findings of studies focused on these organizations in relation to persistence (Delgado-Guerrero, Cherniack, & Gloria, 2014; S. M. Sanchez, 2011) and other forms of development, such as ethnic identity development (Guardia & Evans, 2008), and leadership (Atkinson et al., 2010), underscore the important role these organizations play in the experiences of Latinx college students as they navigate university cultures and develop a sense of belonging.

Delgado-Guerrero and Gloria (2013) explored psychological, social, and cultural aspects of the persistence decisions of members of Latina based sororities at PWIs in the Midwest. Participants responded to a survey made up of several scales measuring the psychological, social, and cultural aspects of persistence decisions including Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) Perceived Cohesion Scale. It is noteworthy to mention that the verbiage of the scale was adapted to reflect the participants' perceived cohesion within their

sorority (i.e. “I feel a sense of belonging to my sorority”; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013, p. 369) as opposed to the university. Persistence decisions were measured using the persistence/voluntary dropout decision scale (see Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). The persistence/voluntary dropout decision scale assessed dimensions of students’ social and academic integration as defined by Tinto’s (1975) theory of student departure. The scale included five subscales: peer-group interactions, interactions with faculty, faculty concern for student development and teaching, academic and intellectual development, and institutional and goal commitments (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). Results showed that there was no significant relationship between reported levels of perceived cohesion and persistence decisions, however higher levels of perceived support from sorority sisters was a positive significant predictor of academic persistence decisions. This finding sheds light on the importance of social support found within Latina sororities, yet it also calls to question whether a sense of belonging to the LGLO plays a significant role to the persistence decisions of Latina college students.

In another study focused on persistence, Sanchez (2011) used a multiple case study approach to qualitatively explore the experiences of male Latino fraternity members at a large selective private four-year Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Specifically focused on aspects of psychological, social and cultural factors of the participants’ experiences, data collection included a demographic survey and an interview with each of the 10 participants. Sanchez identified three overarching themes (psychological factors, social support factors, and racial/ethnic and cultural experiences) that emerged from the data and contributed to the persistence of the participants within the study—each with its own set of sub themes. Notably within these themes, Sanchez

described the significance of Latinx culture and a sense of inclusion in the campus community to the participants' persistence. Furthermore, the author highlighted the critical role of peer support through El Hermandad (The Brotherhood) to participant persistence. The author noted that support through the fraternity offered "more than social support, but also academic, cultural and moral support" (Sanchez, 2011, p. 98) that was influential in the overall college experiences of the Latino LGLO members.

LGLOs have also been connected to other aspects of Latinx college student experiences such as ethnic identity development. Guardia and Evans (2008) examined factors that shaped the ethnic identity development of members of a Latinx Greek letter organization (LGLO) at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) using Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory of human development. Among the microsystems, "the immediate, face-to-face setting in which the person exists" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 302), that contributed to participants' ethnic identity development were the students' home family, membership within the LGLO, and the HSI campus. The LGLO, referred to as the fraternity *hermandad* (brotherhood), was an influential aspect of the participants' experiences. The participants partially attributed feeling a stronger connection to their Latinx culture, and as one participant put it, "the brothers have helped me see myself as a Latino" (p. 173). Within the mesosystem, the overlap among microsystems, participants reported that their involvement in the LGLO spurred their interest in becoming involved in other campus organizations including other forms of ethnic based organizations that additionally contributed to shaping their ethnic identity. These findings emphasize the unique social ties, or brotherhood, offered by LGLOs. In addition, the finding that involvement in the LGLO spurred involvement in other campus organizations raises the

question of whether involvement in the LGLO increased campus sense of belonging for these participants.

Leadership is another dimension of Latinx student experiences that has been connected to engagement in LGLOs. Atkinson et al. (2010) qualitatively explored the experiences of students enrolled in a predominantly White institution who were involved in an organization within the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC), including Latinx Greek organization members, specifically focusing on ways participation in such groups influenced leadership development. Participants in the study described challenges they faced in adjusting to the university and how involvement in the MGC organization "helped them establish close friendships based on sisterhood and brotherhood" (p. 38). The participants also described the role of the organization as a way to maintain cultural awareness and serve their community. The nature of the organizations and the small chapter sizes resulted in the need for students to serve in multiple leadership positions, which simultaneously served as a source of pressure and provided opportunities for growth and the development of leadership skills.

While much of the research on LGLOs highlight the positive outcomes associated with such experiences, Baker's (2008) quantitative study provided some evidence to the contrary. Though the study did not specifically examine outcomes from involvement in LGLOs, the results regarding Greek and ethnic based organizational involvement for Latinx students is noteworthy. The study was focused on African American and Latinx college students attending selective institutions and probed the relationship between involvement in different types of campus organizations (athletic, Greek-letter, political, religious, arts, and minority-based) and academic outcomes in terms of GPA. Results of

the study showed that involvement in minority-based organizations was negatively associated with GPA for Latinas, but not for Latinos. Greek organization involvement, however, was negatively associated with Latino student GPA, but not for Latinas. These mixed findings point to the nuances of organizational type and gender on student experiences and warrant future research that further explores student experiences within these organizations.

Sense of Belonging and Campus Subcontexts

To this point research examining college student sense of belonging has focused primarily on the institutional level by examining ways that student experiences and characteristics may or may not contribute to the development of a sense of belonging to the greater campus community. The focus on institutional level sense of belonging is reflected, for example, in the way Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) described sense of belonging in their study of Latinx college students—"This construct reflects students' affinity with their institution, including whether students feel part of campus life, are a member of the community, and feel a sense of morale as a result of being a student at their public university" (p. 239).

The study by Johnson et al. (2007) explored the role of a particular institutional subcontext, residence life, in relation to student sense of belonging. However, they did so by determining whether the perception of residence halls as being socially supportive was a significant indicator of sense of belonging to the campus. Therefore while this study sheds light on how a subcontext of the campus contributes to a sense of belonging to the institution, it does not provide insight to whether student sense of belonging to the subcontext was more, equally, or less influential in their overall college experience.

Although this study did not compare student sense of belonging on distinct institutional levels, it established that residence halls may be "a particularly important college environment that contributes significantly to students' sense of belonging" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 537). The findings of this study highlight the importance of a particular campus subcontext, residence halls, in relation to college student experiences. The structure of this study, however, did not provide insight to the unique role of these subcontexts in how students develop a sense of belonging on college campuses independent of how it affects campus sense of belonging.

Similarly, the quantitative study by Spanierman et al. (2013) examined the relationship between students' involvement in a Living Learning Community (LLC) and the students' perceived sense of belonging in the university and in the residence hall. The authors reasoned that "because the residence hall context is a primary site for students' day-to-day living and social interactions, sense of belonging in residence may be as important as sense of belonging on the larger campus" (Spanierman et al., 2013, p. 311). The study involved the administration of surveys to nearly 350 undergraduate students at a single public university. Sense of belonging was measured using two versions of the Perceived Cohesion Scale developed by Bollen and Hoyle (1990). The first version asked students about their perceived sense of belonging to the university and the second followed the same format, but replaced university with residence hall or LLC. The findings of this study showed that LLC students' sense of belonging within residence halls was significantly higher than non-LLC members, yet there were no significant differences between the two groups on the campus level. Thus the authors reasoned that there was no evidence of a relationship between LLCs and student sense of belonging on

campus. It is also important to note that due to the small sample size, African Americans and Latinxs were grouped together for data analysis. Although this study provided insight to variations in perceived sense of belonging in different institutional levels, it did not address the students' perception of the importance of these levels of sense of belonging in relation to their overall college experience. Therefore it is possible that even though there was not a relationship between LLC and institutional levels of sense of belonging, a sense of belonging within the LLC could have been more important than a sense of belonging on the institutional level in the experience of some students.

In another study of college subcontexts and sense of belonging, Freeman, Anderman, and Jensen (2007) examined the relationship between sense of belonging on the campus and within classroom environments among first semester freshman at a single public university. Results showed that social acceptance and class sense of belonging was significant and positively related to university sense of belonging. Once student social acceptance and professors' pedagogical caring was added to the model, the relationship was no longer significant. Thus, the researchers argued that the results did not support the notion that sense of belonging in a single class was a significant predictor of a students' sense of belonging on the campus level. Similar to the work of Johnson et al. (2007), the study did not measure the perceived importance of sense of belonging within the classroom setting independent of sense of belonging to the campus, therefore we also lack a clear picture of the role of classroom sense of belonging in college student experiences.

What remains unclear is the extent that sense of belonging to a campus subculture matters to college student experiences regardless of its effect on sense of belonging to the

campus as a whole. While some studies of college student sense of belonging have included campus subcontexts such as residence halls, living learning communities, and classes (Freeman et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Spanierman et al., 2013) within their models, they all examined these subcontexts in light of their influence on sense of belonging to the institution rather than exploring the role sense of belonging within subcontexts separate from the campus as a whole. While the development of student sense of belonging to the greater campus community may seem like the ultimate goal, the literature has shown that for Latinx students, it may be the case that students develop a sense of belonging to campus subcultures without experiencing a sense of belonging to the greater campus community. Because research has yet to focus on subcontexts or subcultures independent of the greater campus community, we do not have a full understanding of how Latinx students develop a sense of belonging on college campuses.

Theoretical Frameworks

The literature has underscored notable influences on Latinx college student sense of belonging, particularly those shaped by contextual dimensions. Ecological theories may provide insight to the dynamics of context in relation to ways Latinx college students develop and experience a sense of belonging at PWIs. The following sections will describe two of such theories—Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1997, 2005) bioecological theory of human development and Strange and Banning's (2015) models of human environments.

Bioecological Theory of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1997, 2005) bioecological theory of human development accounts for the interaction of person and context in human development. The theory was

based on the premise of the ecology of human development, which is essentially the study of human life "and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by the relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 299).

Bronfenbrenner's later work articulated the process-person-context-time (PPCT) model (see Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Lerner, 2005). The four components of the PPCT model begin with the process, referred to within the model as proximal processes. These proximal process were described as "progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychosocial human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment" (Lerner, 2005, p. xvii). However, the effect of process on development is contingent upon person, context, and time—the remaining components of the model.

Within the PPCT, certain person characteristics were identified to influence development. These included dispositions, "bioecological resources of ability, experience, knowledge, and skill," and "demand characteristics that invite or discourage reactions from the social environment of a kind that can foster or disrupt the operation of proximal processes" (Lerner, 2005, p. xvi). These person characteristics not only shape the individual's experiences with proximal processes, but also define other individuals the person interacts within the contextual level that Bronfenbrenner identified as microsystems.

To parse out aspects of context, Bronfenbrenner (1995, 1997) proposed a topology of environmental structures including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem is defined as

> a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit, engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (p. 307)

The mesosystem is the linkage between two or more microsystems. Similar to the mesosystem, the exosystem also consists of two or more settings. However in exosystems, the individual is not contained within at least one of these settings yet occurrences within that setting has an indirect effect on the microsystem, thereby indirectly affecting the individual. The macrosystem is made up of

> the overarching pattern of micro- meso- and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure, with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in such overarching systems. (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 317)

The final dimension of the PPCT model is time, defined in terms of micro-, meso-, and macro- time (Lerner, 2005). In relation to proximal processes, microtime is defined in terms of "continuity versus discontinuity within ongoing episodes," while mesotime refers to periodic time intervals including the span of days and weeks (Lerner, 2005, p. xvii). Finally, macrotime is the "changing expectations and events in the larger society"

that affect the processes of life-long individual development (Lerner, 2005, p. xvii). The element of time underscores the final component of the ecological model referred to as the chronosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1995) described the chronosystem in terms of his first proposed life course principle, "the individual's own developmental life course is seen as embedded in and powerfully shaped by conditions and events occurring during the historical period in which the person lives" (p. 641). Thus, the notion of time may play an important role in student experiences within a given context.

Models of Campus Environments

Though Bronfenbrenner (1997) noted the significance of "particular physical, social, and symbolic features" (p. 15) of microsystems that influence individual development, Strange and Banning's (2015) four models of human environments—including the physical, aggregate, organizational, and socially constructed environments—more specifically addressed ways these aspects are reflected in postsecondary contexts. Strange and Banning (2015) asserted that a critical piece of physical environments is the concept of place, which

> is constituted not only by the built environment—buildings, sidewalks, parking lots, natural and designed landscapes—but also by the many people-made objects and artifacts of material culture that adorn the campus and interact with students, faculty, staff, and visitors alike. (p. 12)

Aggregate environments are made up by the characteristics of the individuals within those environments including attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral patterns. Strange and Banning (2015) noted that environments may be highly consistent—containing many individuals with similar tendencies and characteristics—or inconsistent, in which

individuals are predominantly distinct from one another. One issue that may arise as a result of an inconsistent environment is person-environment incongruence, or said differently, a mismatch between the person and environment. Strange and Banning (2015) noted that "the degree of person-environment congruence is thought to be predictive of an individual's attraction to and satisfaction within an environment" (p. 74). Thus, the degree that students experiences person-environment congruence may influence whether they "adapt to, leave, or try to change an environment" (p. 75). In short, it could influence a student's decision to persist at a given institution.

Organizational environments include the ways institutions are constructed and how power and responsibilities are distributed to achieve a given goal. These goals may be explicit and directly communicated such as through a written mission statement or may include implicit objectives that are not openly communicated. Since organizational environments serve a variety of purposes depending on the institution, it is not surprising that Strange and Banning (2015) asserted that the aims and scope of the organized environment are developed to "build, empower, advocate, or inspire" (p. 85). Organized environments entail aspects such as how work is distributed, who carries out the work, how individuals are rewarded for their work, and what rules will dictate what work is accomplished and how.

Socially constructed environments "focus on the collective subjective views and experiences of participant observers" (Strange & Banning, 2015, p. 116). These perspectives may influence the behaviors of the individuals situated within the institution, therefore examining these perspectives provides insight to the established norms of the institution. For instance, there may be a tendency for members of the college or

university to engage in community service activities or to join campus activities and organizations.

Chapter Summary

Although the literature has illuminated factors that may influence the development of a sense of belonging to the institution as a whole (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Nuñez, 2009), there is a lack of research that provides insight to the distinction between the significance of sense of belonging to the greater campus community and within campus subcultures. This chapter described the rationale for focusing on Latinx college students and described the role of sense of belonging in relation to college student experiences, particularly for Latinx college students. It then discussed why racially minoritized students tend to experience lower levels of sense of belonging compared to their White peers, including a description of the influence of culture and context.

The chapter then discussed the role of campus subcontexts and subcultures and why they should be given greater consideration when examining how Latinx college students develop a sense of belonging. It noted how ethnic based organizations, such as Latinx Greek Letter Organizations, may have a unique effect on Latinx sense of belonging. Yet few researchers have examined the intricacies of LGLOs in terms of their dual roles as ethnic based and fraternal organizations in relation to college student experiences and outcomes though findings from the research that we do have points to mixed outcomes in terms of the role they may play as students transition to the college environment and develop a sense of belonging.

Next the chapter offered the argument that viewing sense of belonging solely in terms of how it manifests on the campus level limits our understanding of Latinx college student experiences. Thus, there is a need for additional literature that examines the development of Latinx college student sense of belonging holistically, considering that sense of belonging within campus subcultures is deserving of its own examination, regardless of whether it is connected to a sense of belonging to the campus community as a whole. The chapter concluded with theoretical frameworks that may be useful in uncovering the contextual nuances of sense of belonging.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose

Sense of belonging affects college student experiences and success in higher education (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2012). Furthermore, cultural and contextual aspects of sense of belonging help to explain why this concept is particularly salient in the experiences of Latinx students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) (Gloria et al., 2005; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Museus, 2008a; Museus & Maramba, 2011; Nuñez, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008). Although the literature has illuminated factors that may influence the development of a sense of belonging to the institution as a whole (Freeman et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Spanierman et al., 2013), there is a lack of research that provides insight to the distinctions among levels of sense of belonging (i.e. to the institution, organization, and the greater society) in relation to the experiences of Latinx college students, thus we do not have a full understanding of how these students experience and develop a sense of belonging in postsecondary contexts.

One particular campus subculture that has been connected to Latinx student sense of belonging is ethnic based student organizations. In Gonzalez's (2002) study for instance, participants found their involvement in an ethnic student organization to be instrumental in their overall college experience and persistence at a PWI despite their sense of alienation from the greater college campus. In addition, Attinasi's (1989) findings showed that campus subcontexts provided students a way to scale down college campuses, providing smaller, more manageable contexts for students to connect to.

These studies show us that it is possible for Latinx students to feel a sense of belonging within a subculture of the institution without feeling a sense of belonging to the institution as a whole. Yet studies to date have solely focused on whether students feel a sense of belonging to the institution and what factors contribute to the development of a sense of belonging to the institution. While some sense of belonging models have included subcontexts of the institution such as residence halls, living learning communities, and classes (Freeman et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Spanierman et al., 2013), they have not examined the degree of importance students give to their sense of belonging to these subgroups independent of the way they perceive their sense of belonging to the institution. Thus we do not have a complete picture of how sense of belonging develops or a clear understanding of whether a sense of belonging at the institutional level is the most important part of college student experiences when compared to the development of a sense of belonging to a sublevel of the campus community. The difference in institutional level and sublevel sense of belonging is an important distinction and, if explored, would contribute to our understanding of student experiences in ethnic based organizations and the development of a sense of belonging for Latinx college students.

LGLOs are one particular form of ethnic based student organizations that play a unique role in relation to Latinx student sense of belonging. The dual nature of these organizations as Greek letter and ethnic based organizations means that these groups embody the purposes of both organizational types by providing a brotherhood/sisterhood that offers members support as they adjust to the college environment that simultaneously embraces the Latinx culture (Moreno, 2012; S. M. Sanchez, 2011). These organizations

are what Museus and Quaye (2009) referred to as collective cultural agents. Museus and Quaye's (2009) seventh proposition asserted the role of "quality and quantity" in student connections to cultural agents' role in an increased probability of persistence. With this logic, one could also reason that the intensity of the relationship between students and cultural agents could similarly influence student sense of belonging. Thus, exploring the experiences of LGLO members can provide critical insight to the role of cultural agents in Latinx college student sense of belonging.

This study explored the role of involvement in a particular university subculture, Latinx Greek letter organizations, in how Latinx college students develop and make meaning of their sense of belonging within PWIs. The following questions guided this research:

1. How do Latinx college students involved in LGLOs at PWIs experience and develop a sense of belonging?
2. What role (if any) does involvement in Latinx fraternities and sororities play in how Latinx college students experience and develop a sense of belonging at PWIs?

In an effort to first gain an understanding of the general process by which Latinx college students develop a sense of belonging, I intentionally left question one unspecified in terms of what students develop a sense of belonging to. Question two then more closely examined the nuances of the role of LGLO involvement in how students develop a sense of belonging at a predominantly White institution.

Researcher Positionality

Qualitative researchers play an important role in the research process and contribute to the construction of knowledge, which is why it is important for researchers to acknowledge the perspectives, assumptions, and biases they enter the research setting with (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) articulated this notion by stating, "Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world…Nevertheless, researchers, not participants, are obligated to be reflexive about what we bring to the scene, what we see, and how we see it" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 15). As a critical, constructivist researcher, I believe that multiple realities exist and that these realities are individual, subjective, and can only be fully explained by the individual that has lived that reality. I recognize that I come to the research process with perspectives and experiential knowledge that shaped the way I have approached this study. Though this is an inescapable reality of qualitative research, it is still imperative to articulate these perspectives by acknowledging my positionality, role as an insider/outsider, and stance on reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I identify as a bi-racial, half Mexican and half White woman born and raised in Texas, a state with a substantial Latinx population. My mother immigrated to the United States from Mexico when she was in elementary school. The stories of her experiences with discrimination and racism as she adapted to the language and culture of the U.S. have impressed on my perspectives of the educational experiences of Latinxs. Educationally, not only was I a first-generation college student, but I was also a first-generation female high school graduate on my maternal side.

While being an insider or outsider denotes the researcher's membership within the group he or she is studying, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) noted that within the space between these positions lies the insider-outsider. My bi-racial identity gives me an insider-outsider perspective on the educational experiences of Latinxs and plays an important role in how I perceive the world and approach my research. While in some ways being Latina gives me an insider perspective through shared cultural experiences with my participants, there are also ways that my experiences may differ. For instance I grew up in an English speaking home and do not speak Spanish fluently. In addition, when people see me or meet me for the first time, my phenotype causes many people not to recognize me as a Latina, therefore I have never personally felt marginalized or discriminated against based on my racial identity.

I approach this research setting recognizing that I have a vested interest in exploring the experiences of Latinx college students, in part, because of my own heritage and cultural background. In addition, through my own experiences of being a Latina first-generation college student, a member of a traditional Greek letter organization, and a student affairs administrator, I bring experiential knowledge to my research. To fully explain my position as a researcher, I should begin with providing some background on my educational experience. I was involved in a number of extracurricular activities throughout high school and graduated in the top 10% of my class, yet, because I was a first-generation college student I had no idea how to navigate the college environment. Simply filling out a FAFSA and registering for courses were very daunting tasks. When I began college, I was extremely disengaged from the campus community. Beyond my interactions with my best friend and roommate I did not make any friends on campus,

join any clubs, or attend any campus events. When I struggled in my courses, I continued to study alone in my dorm room despite the fact that I did not even understand the material I was studying. I had a terrible G.P.A. at the end of the semester and even failed one of my courses because I did not understand the process of dropping a course and felt too embarrassed to ask.

After one semester I made the decision to leave the institution, transfer to a community college for a semester and then begin again at a university closer to home the following fall. During my sophomore year I did much better academically, but was still disengaged overall from the campus and relied on my hometown friends for any social engagement. Despite all of the stereotypes and stigmas I had heard, I made the decision to join a traditional social Greek organization my junior year. My involvement connected me to a circle of friends that shared a unique bond that is not typical of average organizations. We shared traditions, secrets, and rituals that our founders had established over a hundred years before. We attended campus events, hosted and participated in philanthropy events, and participated in intramural sports together. Being a part of the organization finally gave me a place to feel like I belonged, offered me opportunities to develop my leadership skills, and connected me to the greater campus community.

My professional experience as a student affairs administrator in campus activities gave me insight to LGLOs. These organizations stood out to me because, despite their small size, the students within them were extremely visible on campus by attending campus events, engaging in homecoming festivities, and hosting philanthropy events. My experiences in watching their interactions at campus events and volunteering at the campus-wide Greek retreat caused me to see that there was something very unique about

these organizations that set them apart from historically White Greek organizations. Beyond ways that the organization itself brought these students together, there was an element of shared culture that defined these organizations from others. I do not say this to disparage other student groups, however these experiences did cause me to wonder about the role that these organizations played in the experiences of the Latinx students that were a part of them.

I recognize that as a researcher I came into this project with my own biases, but I also believe these experiences have given me experiential knowledge that facilitated the process as I conceptualized this research focus. Simultaneously I also realize that my own experiences may not be reflective of the experiences of others. I call attention to my positionality and insider/outsider role because a foundation of critical research is "challenging power relations both in the world and in the research process itself" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 64). Therefore as a critical researcher, I must reflect on how these issues manifest themselves both within the experiences of the participant, but also within the research setting.

Epistemological Perspective

The underlying premise of qualitative research is that human actions cannot be fully understood without also examining "the meanings and purposes" humans assign to such actions and behaviors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106). However, approaches to studying such phenomenon should be presupposed by the researcher understanding the paradigm they approach research with (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Paradigm is defined as "the basic belief system or worldview" that shapes our views of how knowledge is created and explored (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). Paradigms are characterized by

researcher responses to questions of epistemology and ontology and should guide choices in methodology. Epistemology refers to the "philosophical assumptions about what constitutes knowledge" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 9). The epistemological assumptions for qualitative research provide a foundation for research that explores the individual and subjective experiences of human beings (Creswell, 2013). Ontology is "the form and nature of reality" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Questions of ontology and epistemology define methodology, which is how the researcher approaches the discovery of these realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus when collecting and interpreting qualitative data, it is imperative for researchers to consider the paradigm they adopt during the research process.

I approach this research study with a critical constructivist paradigm. Critical research examines how human life is affected by "systems of inequity such as classism, racism, and sexism" (Lather, 1992, p. 87). Therefore, rather than offer a description of reality, critical researchers strive to dig deeper and "raise critical consciousness" of the role of society in shaping that reality (Carspecken, 2012, p. 44). As in all qualitative research, critical researchers should remain cognizant that multiple perspectives exist and the results of a single study offer one interpretation of the phenomenon (Shields, 2012). Though I believe multiple realities exist and that each person creates and experiences his or her own reality, I also believe that social structures influence the development of those realities. Furthermore, because the essence of sense of belonging is developed within social settings, these social structures have the potential to play even larger roles in the process as Latinx college students develop a sense of

belonging. Thus, adopting a critical stance will help to uncover the interplay of social structures and sense of belonging.

My critical perspective coincides with my adoption of a constructivist paradigm. In terms of ontology, the constructivist perspective asserts the existence of "multiple realities" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). These realities are "socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Therefore, as a constructivist, I believe variations may exist among constructions of the same phenomenon and that there is not an accurate way to construct reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivist epistemology is "transactional and subjectivist" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111), meaning that those involved in the research setting "cocreate understandings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). Methodologies that undergird a constructivist paradigm are "hermeneutical and dialectical" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Meaning is created "and refined only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). My constructivist paradigm has guided my methodological choices, particularly with the use of interviews as they provide insight to the individual meaning participants make of the phenomenon.

Research Design

This study primarily adopted a multiple case study design and incorporated elements from a constructivist grounded theory approach to guide data analysis. Case studies are ideal approaches to uncover contextual nuances, which aligned with this study's primary focus—unraveling the role of context in Latinx college student sense of belonging. Borrowing elements of a constructivist grounded theory approach supported the inductive process of this research analysis while simultaneously recognizing the

mutual role of the researcher and participant in creating meaning in light of contextual influences (Charmaz, 2000).

The rationale for the choice to use a multiple case study design began with the decision to conduct a qualitative research study. Qualitative studies are researchers' attempts "to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Maxwell (2013) asserted that qualitative research is particularly suited for situations when the researcher seeks to explore how participants make meaning of the phenomenon of interest, when the researcher wants to gain an understanding of "particular contexts" in which the participant is situated within and how this context influences their actions, and when researchers seek to explore "the process by which events and actions take place" (p. 30). The focus of this particular study is the process Latinx students experience developing a sense of belonging within PWIs, which is a phenomenon that is deeply embedded within the context the cases are situated in—namely university settings. I sought to uncover the nuances of these contexts in relation to student sense of belonging, thus a qualitative approach was the best way to probe this phenomenon.

A case study is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit" (Merriam, 2001, p. 194), whereas a multicase study examines multiple cases in order to more fully understand the quintain, or phenomenon of interest (Stake, 2006). The quintain in this study was the role of involvement in an institutional subculture in how Latinx college students develop and make meaning of their sense of belonging within PWIs. In a multiple case study, each case is given attention in analysis, yet the ultimate question revolves around developing an understanding of the quintain

(Stake, 2006). Thus, cases should be selected based on what they can reveal about the quintain (Stake, 2006). Merriam (2001) echoed this assertion and noted that "the case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent" (p. 28). LGLOs are a form of an institutional subculture. However they are unique in that they serve a dual role as Greek letter and ethnic based organization, thus they bridge the rich culture of Greek letter organizations together with cultural elements of ethnic based organizations. I selected LGLOs as a particular subculture to study because I reasoned that if it was possible for a student to feel a sense of belonging within a subculture without translating that belonging to the institution as a whole – this phenomenon may be more likely in relation to subcultures that students have strong connections to beyond simply attending organizational meetings. As a result, members of LGLOs may be considered information rich cases. Therefore to effectively bound the cases in this study, cases were defined on the student level, wherein each case is a Latinx based fraternity or sorority member. Defining cases on the individual level was useful in examining the unique nature of each participant's experience while still maintaining the ability to look across cases in order to gain a fuller understanding of the quintain (Stake, 2006).

Grounded theory methods can effectively accompany other qualitative methods (Charmaz, 2006). Though this is not a pure grounded theory study, incorporating aspects of a constructivist grounded theory approach during data analysis helped to make sense of the multiple case study data in light of an inductive, constructivist approach while still maintaining a focus on understanding the quintain (Stake, 2006). The adoption of this analysis approach served as a guide as I used sensitizing concepts as a beginning of

analysis while remaining open to the directions data interpretation were led (Charmaz, 2006).

This heuristic case study, defined as a study that "can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known" (Merriam, 2001, p. 30), attempted to shed light on the phenomenon of interest—namely the development of a sense of belonging at PWIs by members of Latinx fraternities and sororities. The primary data source for this study was collected through a series of individual interviews using photo elicitation with each participant selected for this study. Data collection also included a demographic survey, document analysis, and interviews with professional staff members that oversee fraternity and sorority life at each institution.

Participants

In this multiple case study, cases were bound to individual members of LGLOs as cases. Stake (2006) explained that multiple case studies are distinct from case studies in that, "The ultimate question shifts from 'What helps us understand the case?' toward 'What helps us understand the quintain?" (p. 6). Therefore in order to gain a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of interest, participant sampling was conducted intentionally through a stratified purposeful sampling process (Creswell, 2013) to increase variation among the cases. Creswell (2013) noted that stratified purposeful sampling "illustrates subgroups and facilitates comparisons" (p. 158)—a particularly useful approach to explore the dynamics of the phenomenon of interest. Shedding light on subgroups provided a more complex understanding of how individual differences and contextual influences play a role in the development of a sense of belonging, which is

why I enlisted participants from different universities and LGLO organizations. One important note concerning this sampling strategy is that the decision to include participants from organizations within different college campuses was not to assert that the findings of this study will be generalizable to any institution, but rather, to shed light on some of the contextual nuances that arose within the experiences of students in different institutional settings.

Minoritized students enrolled in PWIs, such as Latinxs, are subject to challenges that threaten their sense of belonging within the college environment such as experiences with hostile climates for diversity (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nuñez, 2009) and difficulties adjusting to campus culture (Museus & Maramba, 2011). Though research has shed light on the potentially unique role that campus subcultures such as LGLOs may have in relation to Latinx student sense of belonging at PWIs, studies have yet to explore these subcultures in relation to student experiences regardless of whether a sense of belonging in campus subcultures influences a sense of belonging to the greater campus community. Yet research has also shown that the involvement of Latinx students in campus subcultures such as LGLOs may play an important role in sense of belonging. Thus, I explored the role of institutional subcultures of PWIs in relation to Latinx student sense of belonging.

Multiple case studies are "particularistic" meaning that they "focus on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon," which is why cases should be bound and selected based on whether they are "an instance" of the phenomenon under question (Merriam, 2001, p. 29). Membership in LGLOs is one instance of involvement in a campus subculture that may affect Latinx sense of belonging. In addition, because the

literature points to the unique role of campus subcultures such as LGLOs in the experiences of Latinx college students, members of these organizations may be considered information rich cases (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, in order to explore Latinx college student sense of belonging, cases were bound to individual members of LGLOs as cases.

Institution selection. To shed light on the complexity of the influence of context, cases were recruited from two large public four-year universities located in different U.S. states based on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Center for Postsecondary Research Indiana University School of Education, 2016) with university recognized Latinx based fraternities and sororities established on campus. Institutions were identified as a PWI based on whether the student population constituted of 50% or more students that identify as White/caucasian as determined by the institutions' most recent enrollment data (Brown & Dancy, 2016).

Participant recruitment. Recruitment began by contacting organizational officers from a total of four organizations, one fraternity and one sorority from each of two different PWIs (University A and University B), and asking for four participants from each. This initial step in recruitment resulted in a total of 11 participants: eight females and four males. University B only had one male fraternity member indicate interest in participating. However there was not another Latinx fraternity on campus to recruit from. In an effort to reach a more equal representation of male and female participants, I reached out to another fraternity at University A and recruited three additional male participants. One male participant from University A left the study after the first interview. In the end, there were a total of 14 participants that completed all

phases of the project, including eight females and six males. Table 3.1 provides participant demographic information including pseudonyms, institutional and LGLO affiliation, semesters enrolled at their current university, age, racial/ethnic identity, and major.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	LGLO	Semesters in University	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Major
University A					
Christina	Kappa Beta	3	19	Mexican	Apparel Design
Davina	Kappa Beta	3	19	Mexican	Civil Engineering
Nine	Kappa Beta	7	21	Latinx	Psychology
Paloma	Kappa Beta	3	19	Mexican	Kinesiology & Health
Delta	Nu Sigma	7	25	Hispanic/Latinx	Mechanical Engineering
Romeo	Nu Sigma	5	20	Hispanic	Civil Engineering
Fernando	Omega Iota	5	20	Hispanic	Mechanical Engineering
Hector	Omega Iota	3	19	Mexican-American	Computer Engineering
Juan	Omega Iota	7	21	Mexican-American	Environmental Science
University B					
Karla	Pi Delta	3	19	Mexican	Biochemistry
Lori	Pi Delta	5	20	Hispanic	Nutrition & Exercise Science
Participant01	Pi Delta	7	21	Latinx	Human Development & Family Science
Omi	Pi Delta	5	20	Mexican-American	Elementary & Special Education
Luis	Zeta Alpha	7	21	Latinx	Latin American / Global Studies

Data Collection

As previously discussed, the purpose of a multiple case study research approach is to gain a complex understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Stake, 2006). This particular study aims to understand how Latinx college students develop a sense of belonging at PWIs. Therefore, the focus of this study implicates an examination of two important components, place and person. Accordingly data collection and analysis focused on organizational data that provides insight to the inner workings and communicated policies and initiatives of the university and LGLO the participant is a part of, as well as individual data focused on participant experiences and perspectives.

Organizational data. Organizational data included document collection and an interview with a staff member that oversees Greek life at each of the two institutions involved in this study. Information acquired through these interviews was primarily used to establish a more complex and nuanced understanding of the context students were situated within. In addition, these responses were used to prompt interview questions to students regarding their views of Greek organizational culture and policies as discussed in staff interviews.

Documents. In an effort to further unveil contextual influences that play a role in aspects of the participants' sense of belonging, a number of documents were collected. These documents included the communicated missions and purposes of the individual organizations and those espoused by the national organizations; the mission and purpose of the greater campus fraternity and sorority life; the mission and strategic plan of the institutions; institutional diversity policies, statements, and initiatives; and national umbrella organization policies, mission, and purpose statements (if applicable).

Documents were primarily collected online, but also through print as necessary (such as in the case of campus newspapers). Following participant interviews, additional documents were collected as a means of triangulating data based on instances when participants referenced other institutional or organizational initiatives or events beyond those described in the documents already collected.

Staff interview. Prior to student interviews, an interview with a professional staff member that oversees fraternity and sorority life at each institution was conducted in order to gain further insight to the institutional and organizational context the participants are situated within. These interviews primarily delved into the staff member's perception of the relationship between Latinx based fraternities and sororities within Greek life and the greater campus community, but also focused on aspects of the exosystem, including institutional policies and initiatives implemented by the university that affect Latinx based fraternities and sororities. See Appendix A for the full interview protocol.

Individual Data. Individual data included demographic information surveys and a series of three interviews with the participants (LGLO members) involved in this study. Information acquired through demographic information surveys was used to distinguish participants from one another as well as to gain further insight to the role of individual experiences and background in relation to the development of a sense of belonging. Interviews were the primary data source in this study and were used in two primary ways: to establish a more complex and nuanced understanding of the context students are situated within and to prompt questions that I asked students during their interviews regarding their views on the campus and organizational culture and policies.

Demographic information surveys. Students were asked to complete demographic information surveys prior to the first interview (see Appendix B). These surveys were available online via Qualtrics. The purpose of the survey was to acquire background information regarding the participants' identities, pre-college experiences, and college experiences that play a role in shaping individual sense of belonging. The survey began with questions regarding the participants' individual identity including gender, racial/ethnic identity, and age. Participants were also asked whether they were first-generation college students and if they or their parents immigrated to the U.S. from a different country. Next, the survey probed students' pre-college experiences including the approximate size of their high school, the racial composition of their high school (whether the population was made up of predominantly White students, predominantly ethnic/racial minority students, or an even mix of ethnic/racial minorities and White students), and whether they were involved in campus organizations as a high school student. Finally, the survey asked questions regarding **c**ollege related academic and social experiences including major, whether they live on or off campus, semesters enrolled at their current institution, transfer status, hours enrolled, estimated GPA, the name of the LGLO the participant was involved in, whether they were members of other campus organizations, and leadership positions they held within the LGLO or other campus organizations (see Appendix B).

Interviews. Due to my constructivist paradigm and belief in individually constructed realities, the primary form of data collection for this study was through a series of interviews with individual participants (Latinx members of LGLOs). Three individual interviews, each lasting approximately one hour, were conducted with each

participant. The first interview used a traditional semi-structured interview approach (Creswell, 2013) while the second and third interviews used photo elicitation—the use of photographs in an interview setting (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Harper, 2002)—combined with a semi-structured interview approach to further probe the contextual dimensions of student sense of belonging (described further below).

My interactions with the participants were driven by my constructivist approach, particularly the need to establish "a relationship of reciprocity with the participants" as opposed to a hierarchical relationship (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 9). My role in establishing reciprocity included being cognizant of the participant's schedule for interviewing, maintaining an adaptable approach with questions during the interview setting, sharing control over the interview process, engaging in the dialogue by answering questions and providing thoughts, and remaining open to participant responses (Mills et al., 2006). Using this approach can therefore be described as "data generation as opposed to data collection" (Mills et al., 2006, p. 10) as I worked alongside the participants to make meaning of their experiences.

Importantly, as a result of my critical constructivist approach to research, I strived to make sense of participants' individual lived experiences while uncovering ways social structures have influenced these experiences. Interviews were focused on student perceptions of individual sense of belonging within their university setting in addition to proximal processes occurring between and among environmental levels (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) and their effect on sense of belonging (Lerner, 2005). The interviews specifically identified ways student perceptions of the influence of contextual dimensions from the physical, aggregate, organizational, and

socially constructed environments (Strange & Banning, 2015) affect these proximal processes and, in turn, sense of belonging at each of the systemic levels. Interview one consisted of two sections of questions. The first section consisted of questions focused on participant experiences as they began at their university and became involved in their LGLO. The second section explored whether participants felt a sense of belonging within the institution as a whole, within the LGLO, and ways the two overlap and/or influence one another. See Appendix C for a full list of interview questions.

Interviews two and three used a combination of a semi-structured interview approach and photo elicitation. Photo elicitation involves the use of photographs, provided by the interviewer or brought by the interviewee, within a research interview (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Harper, 2002). It was first introduced by Collier (1957) in an exploration of ways photography could be used in social science research, one of which was the use of photos to facilitate interviews. Photo elicitation interviews strongly align with a constructivist approach because they are focused on "the subjective meaning of those images for the interviewee" (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004, p. 1512). Importantly, Clark-Ibanez (2004) described that "photographs can generate data that illuminate a subject invisible to the researcher but apparent to the interviewee" (p. 1516). Thus, it can be useful to researchers that seek to obtain insight to the unique way the participant views the world. The use of visual images within a research interview "evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words" (Harper, 2002, p. 13), which often results in different responses than traditional approaches.

The use of photo elicitation serves dual roles for the researcher and participant—while the researcher can use the photos to facilitate the interview conversation and draw

details from the interviewee, the photos can also provide participants an alternate way to "communicate dimensions of their lives" (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004, p. 1512). Additionally, photos can combat some challenges associated with interviewing such as facilitating the process as the researcher and interviewee establish rapport, offering a way to structure the interview, and by decreasing the potential "awkwardness of interviews" by providing a focal point (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004, p. 1512).

Images provided by the researcher are an effective approach to theory-based studies while allowing the interviewees to bring their own photos is ideal for inductive research (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004). Given the inductive nature of this study and the goal to gain a more complex view of the participants' experiences, participants were directed to take pictures of places they felt a sense of belonging and places they did not. Participants were provided examples of places within the university they could consider including classrooms, recreational centers, fraternity or sorority houses, or meeting rooms. As reflected in the unspecified design of research question one, I was interested in general aspects of micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems that played a role in overall Latinx student sense of belonging. Therefore, I did not ask participants to limit their photo selection to campus environments. To gain a clearer picture of how sense of belonging is shaped by other contextual levels and settings, I also encouraged students to include places located off campus such as their work, home, a friend's house, or any other place they felt they did or did not belong. These photos were used to spark conversation concerning aspects of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystems that played a role in participants' sense of belonging. Furthermore, these photos were used as a prompt to probe what it was about those contexts particularly the physical, aggregate,

organizational, and socially constructed environments (Strange & Banning, 2015), that contributed to sense of belonging. See Appendix D for a list of interview questions.

Three participants voiced their preference not to collect photos and to instead discuss their identified spaces of belonging through discussion. I allowed students to take ownership in the research process and agreed to this modified format for their interviews. Therfore with these participants, instead of bringing designated photos to the interview, they compiled a list of places they felt a sense of belonging in and places they did not.

Interview three continued the same combined photo elicitation and semi-structured interview approach to discuss any images (or identified places) that were not covered during interview two. In addition, two sets of questions were used to fill in gaps that were not discussed in the previous interviews. These questions were focused on the campus climate for diversity and the role of the LGLO in relation to the participant's sense of belonging. Questions from Appendix D again guided the discussion focused on the participant provided photos (or identified places) while Appendix E contains a list of additional questions used in the final interview.

Conceptual Framework

Dependence on existing frameworks within the literature may be problematic for researchers, causing them to overlook alternative ways that data may be interpreted (Becker, 2007). Accordingly, Becker (2007) warned researchers to "use the literature, don't let it use you" (p. 149). Becker's argument is particularly important in inductive studies such as grounded theory research where the goal is to remain open to possible interpretations of the phenomenon of interest. Borrowing from a grounded theory research approach, this study used previous literature to provide "sensitizing concepts" to

develop a preliminary understanding of influences that shape Latinx student sense of belonging (Blumer, 1969).

Sensitizing concepts give researchers "a place to start, not to end" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 17) and can be used to build a conceptual framework, which forms the basis for interpreting phenomenon (Bowen, 2006). Maxwell (2013) defined a conceptual framework as "the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research" (p. 39). Conceptual frameworks are distinct from theoretical frameworks in that they do not rely on a single theory or ideas drawn from one theory, but instead connect multiple concepts together to understand a given phenomenon (Imenda, 2014). Although this study was guided by the use of a preconceived conceptual framework, I remained sensitive to competing interpretations and findings that emerged from the data.

This study was guided by the definition of sense of belonging as described by Strayhorn (2012): "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3). Although Strayhorn's definition mentions individuals on campus, it does not specifically call attention to the role of campus subcultures; however this is an important consideration in the present study. The literature on sense of belonging underscores the notion that the development of a sense of belonging is highly contextual. The role the individual nature of campus communities was exemplified, for instance, in Hurtado and Carter's (1997) study. Among the participants, Latinx students that perceived racial-ethnic tensions existing on their college

campuses experienced lower levels of sense of belonging compared to those that did not. Yet, among the students that reported the existence of racial-ethnic tensions on campus, those that belonged to ethnic based student organizations reported higher levels of a sense of belonging than students not involved. Although this finding does not shed light on whether a sense of belonging within the subculture was more or less important than a sense of belonging to the institution, it does support the assertion that subcultures contribute to sense of belonging in unique and unexplored ways. The unique role of subcultures highlights the significance of the role these groups may play in relation to overall student sense of belonging despite institutional context (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Thus our understanding of sense of belonging would benefit from a closer look into contextual aspects, including subcultures of the university, that affect how students experience a sense of belonging on a college campus.

In order to explore these dimensions of students' perceived sense of belonging and how they influence one another in light of contextual influences, I used Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1997, 2005) ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner (1977) asserted that in order to understand student development, context must be considered. He reflected,

> the understanding of human development demands going beyond the direct observation of behavior on the part of one or two persons in the same place; it requires examination of multiperson systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject. (p. 514)

Although it is not possible to examine every contextual influence on students' perceived sense of belonging within one study, this study used Bronfenbrenner's process-person-context-time (PPCT) model as a guide to identify contextual levels that played a role in Latinx student sense of belonging, what proximal processes were occurring on such levels, and in what ways these contextual levels and processes influenced one another to shape sense of belonging.

The proximal processes within the PPCT refer to "complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychosocial human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment" (Lerner, 2005, p. xvii). These processes manifest themselves within environmental structures. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development consists of four environmental structures: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1997). This study explored student experiences within key microsystems as identified by participants in relation to their perceived sense of belonging—(i.e. the student's home, work, classrooms, Latinx fraternity or sorority meetings, other organizational settings, etc.). On the mesosystem level, I explored the overlap among experiences within two or more of the microsystems previously identified. Similar to mesosystems, the exosystems included the connection between two or more microsystems, but "at least one of which does not contain the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 24). One exosystem considered in this study was the connection between the institutional policies and initiatives that were produced in higher level administrative meetings and implemented by the institution that affected the institutional culture and/or Greek life on the campus. I also remained open to other emerging examples of exosystems as they manifested in participant stories.

The macrosystems included student perceptions of campus climate and student perceptions of society as a whole.

Identifying contextual levels did not illuminate how a sense of belonging is developed within those levels, perhaps even more crucial were the proximal processes occurring within those levels that affect sense of belonging. The significance of the interactions within a particular context begged the question of what aspects within those environments defined these proximal processes, or in other words played a role in the reciprocal interactions that make up these processes. Furthermore, I explored in what ways do these processes influence the development of a sense of belonging? Bronfenbrenner's (1997) description of microsystems included the significance of "particular physical, social, and symbolic features" that play a role in individual development. These components offer a way for researchers to probe what is occurring within these microsystems in terms of human development, however Strange and Banning's (2015) four models of human environments—the physical, aggregate, organizational, and socially constructed environments—were developed particularly in light of postsecondary contexts. Due to the specificity to higher education contexts, this study also considered Strange and Banning's (2015) components of campus environments in conjunction with Bronfenbrenner's model to further explore the nature of proximal processes that occurred within a given context and contributed to or impeded the development of a sense of belonging for Latinxs.

Importantly, my critical perspective played an important role in using these frameworks. As a result, in addition to considering the role of Bronfenbrenner's environmental structures and Strange and Banning's models of human environments in

relation to the experiences of the participants in this study, I also remained aware of the role of power inequities in an effort to "not just understand what is going on, but also to critique the way things are" (Merriam, 2009, p. 60).

Data Analysis

Data analysis first involved an examination of the institutional level data, which included the collected documents and interview transcripts from the university Greek life coordinators at each of the institutions. As previously discussed, these forms of data were used to strengthen my understanding of the institutional and organizational context that I considered in relation to the experiences of individual cases as well as across cases. Analysis then proceeded to individual level data, beginning with within case analysis and then moving to cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2001). The within case analysis consisted of an inductive first and second cycle coding process (Saldaña, 2016). Following these processes, I turned my attention to the collection of cases during the cross-case analysis.

Institutional Data

I opted to collect documents and Greek life staff interviews to gain further insight to contextual influences on Latinx sense of belonging, therefore the main focus of institutional data analysis was to closely examine documents and interview transcripts for evidence of inclusive environments that supported or impeded the development of a sense of belonging for Latinxs. The use of this data primarily served the role of providing additional context to understand student experiences and as a way to prompt additional questions during the LGLO member interviews. Because of my constructivist perspective as a researcher, institutional data was not used to interpret the experiences of individual

LGLO members. However it was used as a means of triangulating data (see more in the trustworthiness section).

As I examined the documents in search of evidence of inclusive environments, I paid particular attention to ways the university was described in relation to diversity, inclusion, support services for students, and racial discrimination. I also looked closely at statements or actions taken in response to racial incidents on campus. While analyzing documents, I remained aware of Charmaz's (2006) warning to researchers to position texts in light of the contexts they were developed in. Some questions Charmaz (2006) encouraged researchers to consider that were pertinent to this study included who created the document and how, what was the professed purpose of the document, whether it is possible the document serves other unstated purposes, what meaning can be gathered from the document, and in what ways does this meaning reflect aspects of "a particular social, historical, and perhaps organizational context" (p. 39).

Staff interview transcripts were used for two essential purposes. First, they assisted in more fully developing an understanding of elements of the culture and Greek life community at the institution that may affect LGLO member sense of belonging. Second, within the interviews staff were asked to identify policies and initiatives implemented by campus and national umbrella organizations that affected processes within the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystem, thus providing further insight to ways LGLO members develop a sense of belonging. The goal of examining institutional documents and staff interview transcripts was not necessarily to develop a formal assessment of the campus climate, but rather to provide additional context to understand participant experiences.

Individual Level Data

Analysis of individual level data fulfilled two purposes as identified by Moore, Lapan, and Quartaroli (2012) —to separate aspects of the data out in an effort to "examine them in their smallest components" and then to reconstruct the data "in a more meaningful way" (p. 263). Individual data analysis began by using the demographic information surveys along with participant interview transcripts to conduct within case analysis (Merriam, 2001). The within case analysis consisted of an inductive first and second cycle coding process designed to construct a complex understanding of how each individual case (LGLO member) developed a sense of belonging at a PWI (Saldaña, 2016). After the second cycle coding was completed, I then turned my attention to the collection of cases during the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2001). The purpose of this level of analysis was to examine patterns of similarities and/or differences across participant experiences.

Demographic information surveys. Attribute coding was adopted during the first cycle coding process (Saldaña, 2016) through the use of demographic information surveys. Essentially attribute coding is comprised of collecting key demographic descriptors of each of the participants. Saldaña (2016) noted attribute coding is particularly useful for studies involving multiple participants and research locations. Demographic characteristics were useful in distinguishing participants from one another as well as during the process of comparing across participant experiences.

Interview analysis. To analyze interview data, I first began with within-case analysis using first and second cycle coding processes. While coding I looked for evidence of participant experiences with and influences that played a role in the

development of a sense of belonging within the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystems the participants were situated. I did so while giving particular attention to aspects of the physical, aggregate, organizational, and socially constructed environments that played a role within these contexts in relation to sense of belonging. Following the completion of within-case analysis through first and second cycle of coding, I then conducted cross-case analysis.

First cycle coding. First cycle coding consisted of two major parts—an initial review of the transcripts while constructing preliminary jottings and analytic memos (Saldaña, 2016) followed by line by line coding using a combination of initial and emotion coding approaches (Saldaña, 2016). I transcribed all of the interviews first-hand and used the opportunity to construct preliminary jottings (Saldaña, 2016) concerning my initial reactions and connections I recognized within the data. I also indicated additional questions or points of clarification I needed to follow up with participants on during subsequent interviews. After all interviews were transcribed, I began by reviewing the interview transcripts as well as listening to interview recordings. I continued to construct preliminary jottings (Saldaña, 2016) during this stage by noting key words and concepts on the interview transcripts, including special notes on contextual relationships identified in relation to the information collected from documents and Greek life coordinator interviews. In addition, as I initially reviewed the data I constructed analytic memos to reflect on "coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and sub-categories, themes and concepts" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 44). Analytic memos provide researchers the opportunity to reflect on the nature of the data and articulate emergent patterns and notable occurrences within the

data, thus providing an avenue for simultaneously examining and analyzing the data. These memos were not limited to reflections involving the interpretation of the data itself. As suggested by Saldaña (2016), these memos also included initial thoughts regarding my positionality in relation to the participants and the phenomenon of interest, as well as thoughts on the process of coding and the interrelationship among codes and emergent themes and ways the theoretical framework did or did not explain these patterns. Perhaps more significantly, I developed memos that spoke to the participants: routines, "repetitive and sometimes mundane matters" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 47) individuals tended to on a daily basis; rituals, actions and events that were significant to the participant; rules, "socialized behavior and the parameters of conduct that empower or restrict human action" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 47); roles, positions we take on in given situations; and relationships among other individuals.

In order to navigate the large amount of data collected for each participant and to facilitate the sense making process of each participant's experiences, transcripts underwent a thorough review to develop case analysis documents. These case analysis documents were designed to ease the transition between individual case analysis and cross-case analysis through the development of composite sequence analysis, which will be further described in the cross-case section below (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The documents organized participant's "journey across time" with attention to "phases, stages, and cycles" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 211). To create these documents, each participant's transcripts were read and organized into a rough case analysis loosely based on chronology, but primarily by experiences (i.e. transitioning to college, joining campus organizations, experiences with campus climate, etc.). These rough case analyses were

then carefuly re-examined and refined into more succinct and analytical interpretive documents. Following Stake's (2006) advice to focus on one case at a time, yet still remaining aware of the quintain, I made notes of prominent experiences or perspectives that were later used to conduct the composite sequence analysis.

To gain a more complex understanding of process, case analysis documents then underwent a round of first cycle inductive, line-by-line coding by hand. Line-by-line coding was conducted with a sensitivity to both cognitive and affective experiences of the participants as part of the development of a sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) with particular attention to processes undergirding student experiences and emotional responses to these processes. Thus, I adopted a combination of coding approaches including initial and emotion coding. Initial coding "breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). Using initial coding, I "search[ed] for processes—participant actions that have antecedents, causes, consequences, and a sense of temporality" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 118). I primarily relied on initial coding in an effort "to remain open to all possible theoretical directions" (Charmaz, 2014), but remained particularly sensitive to data that indicated an affective reaction by integrating emotion coding.

Emotion coding is best used in studies "that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions, especially in matters of social relationships, reasoning, decision-making, judgment, and risk-taking" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 125). Emotion coding has implications for the researcher. Specifically, Saldaña (2016) emphasized that "abilities to read non-verbal cues, to infer underlying affects, and to

sympathize and empathize with your participants, are critical for emotion coding" (p. 125). Emotion coding involves being aware of chains of emotions including initial emotional responses as well as emotions that have preemptively triggered the response and those that follow as a consequence of the emotion. It also implicates the identification of actions and experiences that initiate and are influenced by emotional responses.

After pulling the data apart during line-by-line coding, I began to pull the data back together by first engaging in code mapping (Saldaña, 2016). During the first iteration of code mapping, a full list of the codes developed during the first round coding were compiled while the second iteration further refined the list during second cycle coding.

Second cycle coding. Second cycle coding was first carried out through the second iteration of code mapping (Saldaña, 2016). Second cycle coding involved comparing and contrasting the codes generated through first round coding and developing a system of code grouping and naming the code categories. I then employed axial coding to identify relationships among the categories and subcategories and refined these in a more succinct way. Saldaña (2016) explained that axial coding sheds light on the "contexts, conditions, interactions, and consequences of a process" (p. 244). The notion of process is again critical to data analysis as it was vital to uncover *how* Latinx students develop a sense of belonging. The role of proximal processes within micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystems on the degree participants felt a sense of belonging was an important consideration of this stage of analysis. These proximal processes provided insight to ways these contextual levels interact and shape how students develop a sense of

belonging—regardless of whether that sense of belonging was toward the institution, subculture, or other dimension. Using Strange and Banning's campus environments as a guide in examining these processes helped to further explain not only what was occurring, but also why and how. Initial jottings and analytic memos were also instrumental during this step as they provided insight to ways the data spoke to the categories. Second cycle coding continued until the point of saturation—"when no new information seems to emerge during coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 136).

Cross-case analysis. To recognize the complexities of individual experiences and the development of a sense of belonging, I used the categories and subcategories that resulted from axial coding to explore similarities and differences across participant experiences using composite sequence analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Composite sequence analysis is grounded in "typical stories or scenarios from multiple individual cases to develop a collective network that represents their common and unique features in meaningful sequences and paths" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 211). I chose to use composite sequence analysis bcause of its ability to reflect shared experiences across multiple "individual stories" while still offering the ability to capture the nuances of individual participants (Miles et al., 2014, p. 211). As noted by Maxwell (2013), I looked beyond similarities and differences to identify "relationships that connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole" (p. 113). I developed a composite sequence analysis chart to assemble data into a network display and refined it to reflect nuances in how Latinx college students develop a sense of belonging in PWIs.

Although cross-case analysis is a critical piece of a multiple case study, Stake (2006) warned multiple case study researchers of the tension that exists between the need

for attention toward a single case versus all other cases as a whole in the study. For the sake of interpretation, it is important to maintain a balance between the two foci; I remained cognizant of this dynamic throughout data analysis. Thus, I first examined connections within cases (each respective Latinx based fraternity or sorority member) using the content-analytic summary table by identifying the connections, similarities, and differences between the individual experiences with and development of a sense of belonging. Following this process, I adopted the same investigative process across cases by comparing the findings across the cases followed by constructing a list of themes for the overall findings and analyzing relationships among the themes.

Trustworthiness

The use of a multiple case study approach (Merriam, 2001) and the adoption of a stratified purposeful sampling process are two important ways I ensured the trustworthiness of this research. Merriam (2001) asserted, "the more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (p. 40). The measures used to maximize variation also assisted me in identifying rival explanations (Yin, 2011). Including participants that differ by institution, organization, and gender is an approach that was useful in representing diverse perspectives and the possibility for discrepant evidence (Maxwell, 2013).

Data was triangulated through the use of multiple data sources including interviews with participants and Greek life coordinators, photos, and document analysis (Moore et al., 2012). However given the subjectivity of all data forms, I recognized the limitations of triangulation as a measure of ensuring the validity of findings. Rather,

triangulation was used to obtain a wider span of data in an effort to produce a more complex explanation of the phenomenon. Thus, triangulation was also instrumental as I worked toward providing a thick, rich description. Stake (2010) explained that studies that provide in-depth details offer a rich description, but researchers move from providing rich details toward a thick description when, "it offers direct connection to cultural theory and scientific knowledge" (p. 49).

Although member checking is often referred to as sending materials to the participants to verify findings, member checking can be used to go beyond verifying to developing findings (Charmaz, 2006). Following the example of Albas and Albas (1988), once I completed the case analysis documents for each participant, I emailed the participants a copy of the document and a request for their feedback regarding whether their experiences were reflected within the findings and to add details or clarify their thoughts as necessary. Participants were instructed to either email back comments and suggestions directly on the Word document or to meet with me to discuss their feedback. Four participants responded with feedback directly on the documents or in the email text, the other participants did not respond to the request. Based on feedback provided by the participants, I made adjustments accordingly to individual case analysis documents.

Importantly, I remained reflexive of my own influence on this study through my previously described positionality as a researcher and identification as an insider-outsider (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Issues of positionality underscore important implications for selecting a methodology, carrying out analysis, and writing up results. As Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) explained, positionality involves a reflection on "not only what is said and what was not, but also what was quoted and what was not…Are power

structures being protected at the expense of participants?...Are researchers even conscious of what they include or exclude?" (p. 26). Reflexivity implicated that I remained cognizant of my own individual perspectives and biases and consistently re-examined how these biases and subjective perspectives played a role in data analysis and interpretation. While my bias cannot be completely removed from the research process (Maxwell, 2013), exercising reflexivity and considering ways it could influence the results of this work were important steps toward protecting the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Ethical Issues

Ethical concerns were a consideration in all facets of this study's design (Maxwell, 2013). As I have previously articulated, it was my responsibility as a researcher to remain reflexive concerning my positionality, role as an insider-outsider, and overall influence on the research process. An awareness of these dynamics was critical in the design of this study, but played an even greater role during data collection and analysis. Engaging in reflexivity helped ensure I did not misrepresent the experiences of the participants or the study findings (Maxwell, 2013). As articulated by Jones et al. (2014), remaining aware of my positionality did not only entail considerations of what I have written, but also what I excluded from the report and ultimate findings.

Prior to beginning data collection procedures for this study, I gained permission to carry out this project from the institutional review board at my current institution as well as obtained approval from the participants' institutions through the respective Office of Greek Life (Creswell, 2013). As advised by Creswell (2013), I did not select institutions I had any "vested interest" (p. 58) in with regards to the outcomes of the study and went

through gatekeepers at these institutions to gain permission to contact students within those organizations. Throughout this process I was transparent in communicating the purpose and scope of the research study and ensured participants received and understood all information regarding the study including a detailed informed consent form they were asked to sign when they agreed to participate (Creswell, 2013). I also respected the voluntary nature of research and remained sensitive to the fact that some individuals chose not to participate and a participant decided to discontinue their involvement during the process. In these cases I did not pressure individuals to continue in or to be part of the study (Creswell, 2013).

The interviews for this study were focused on individual sense of belonging, which is a personal and potentially emotional subject area. Because of the nature of these interviews, I was aware that conversations in these settings could bring up uncomfortable or emotionally painful memories of participant experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During these occasions, I remained sensitive to the participants, but also aware that I was not professionally trained as a therapist and was therefore prepared to direct participants toward appropriate forms of assistance and resources if needed as suggested by Patton (2015).

I addressed ethical issues pertaining to participant information by allowing all participants to select a pseudonym for use during the data analysis process and in all reported findings (Creswell, 2013). When writing the findings of this study, information regarding individual cases has been reported in addition to composite findings across cases—however participant confidentiality was protected by removing all personally identifying information from these reports (Creswell, 2013). While I sought to portray the

experiences of the participants in this study through reported findings, I was also ethically bound not to publish any information that could be "potentially damaging to particular individuals or groups" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 87). Therefore I was consistently cognizant and reflective of the nature of these reports.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I described the rationale and research questions guiding this study. I explicated my positionality as a researcher in addition to my role as a insider-outsider and intentions to engage in reflexivity. I then described my epistemological perspective that defines my worldview and as a result, the selection of this research focus and study design. Next, I described the conceptual framework that guided this study in addition to the rationale for adopting a multiple case study design that incorporated elements from a constructivist grounded theory. I then described the research design, participant sampling approach, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategy. The chapter concluded with a description of how I ensured the trustworthiness of this research and how ethical issues were addressed.

Chapter 4: Context

Organizational and Participant Context

Before delving into the findings of this study, it is important to first provide some context to better understand the results. Notably, all institutions, organizations, and participants will be referred to using pseudonyms. The first section of this chapter provides background regarding the institutions included in this study. The chapter then offers individual participant descriptions including stories detailing their college trajectories, transition, and initial development of a sense of belonging on campus and within their LGLO. The chapter concludes with ways that participants described their choice to join Latinx Greek letter organizations as well as the unique characteristics of these groups such as their purpose, membership process, and the activities and initiatives they engaged in.

For the sake of clarity, I offer the following definitions of terms used by the participants in reference to the LGLOs and Greek Life on campus as a whole. These terms include *traditional(s), brother/sister, membership process, interest, line or line brother/line sister, and cross.*

- *Traditional(s)* is a term participants used to refer to members of Greek chapters in the Interfraternity Council (IFC) or the National Panhellenic Council (NPC).
- *Brother/sister* are designations of other members of the respective fraternity or sorority.
- *Membership Process* is the secret process individuals undergo to gain membership in the fraternity or sorority.

- An *interest* is an individual that is undergoing the organizational membership process.
- *Line or Line brother/line sister* are phrases used to identify the group of individuals that go through the membership process and join the fraternity or sorority together.
- *Cross* is the process of transitioning from an interest to a recognized member of the fraternity or sorority.

Institutional and Organizational Context

University A and University B are both midwestern large, public four-year universities classified as R1 institutions with highest research activity (Center for Postsecondary Research Indiana University School of Education, 2016). Table 4.1 provides the state and institutional demographics for both universities. University A is located in a state with a total population of over three million as of 2015 with close to 87% of of the population identifying as White alone and 6% as Hispanic or Latinx (United States Census Bureau, 2016). University B is situated within a state in the Midwest with nearly two million residents as of 2015, 80% of whom identified as White alone and just over 10% who identified as Hispanic or Latinx. The two universities share relatively similar demographics in terms of student enrollment. According to 2015 data reported by University A's Office of Institutional Research, there were an estimated 30,000 undergraduate students and nearly 36,000 including graduate students. Approximately 71% of the total student population identified as White, and nearly 4.5% identified as Hispanic or Latinx. Nearly 9% identified with a racially minoritized population other than Hispanic or Latinx. According to 2015 data reported by University

B's Office of Institutional Research, there were just over 20,000 undergraduate students enrolled and over 25,000 including graduate students. Approximately 75% of the student population identified as White, nearly 5% identified as Hispanic or Latinx, and an estimated 8% identified with another racially minoritized population.

Table 4.1

Institutional Demographics

Characteristic	University A	University B
State Total Population	3,000,000	2,000,000
State Latinx Population	6%	10%
State White Population	87%	80%
Total Student Enrollment	36,000	25,000
White Student Enrollment	71%	75%
Latinx Student Enrollment	4.5%	5%
Other Racially Minoritized Student Enrollment	9%	8%

Interviews with Greek Life staff members provided important contextual details regarding the Greek community at each university. There are an estimated 5,000 Greek students at University A, which constitutes nearly 17% of the undergraduate student population. There are nearly 50 chapters established on campus that fall under the Panhellenic Council and Interfraternity Council at University A, which are considered councils for "traditional" organizations. Seven of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) organizations, historically Black fraternities and sororities, and approximately 10 Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) organizations are also present within the Greek

system at University A. This study included three of the organizations from MGC, two Latinx based fraternities—Nu Sigma and Omega Iota—and one Latinx based sorority—Kappa Beta. In addition to these organizations there is another Latinx based sorority, an Asian based fraternity and sorority, an LGBTQA organization, and several multicultural organizations.

Over 20% of the study body is involved in Greek Life at University B. There are nearly 40 "traditional" fraternities and sororities and four NPHC organizations established on campus. There are also a total of four fraternities and sororities under the Multicultural Greek Council at University B. In addition to one Latinx based Greek letter sorority—Pi Delta—and one Latinx based Greek letter fraternity—Zeta Alpha, both included in this study, there is also one Asian based fraternity and one Asian based sorority within the council. The LGLOs included in this study from both University A and University B ranged in size from an estimated 5 members to 16. Active membership entails being in good standing with the organization, therefore when participants were unsure of the exact number of active members in the chapter they provided their best estimate.

Participant Information

This section provides detailed information for each participant tracing to background and pre-college experiences that played a role in their path to their respective institution. Table 3.1 shows a breakdown of participant demographic information including pseudonyms, institutional and LGLO affiliation, semesters enrolled at their current university, age, racial/ethnic identity, and major. Following the demographic table, participant stories describe individual transitions to the university as well as

participants' early perceptions of sense of belonging within their LGLO and the greater campus community. To assist in navigating the following content, the stories are organized in the same order as listed in Table 3.

Christina

Christina is a 19 year old Mexican female in her third semester at University A majoring in Apparel Design. Christina is the youngest of six children in her immediate family and the second that attended college (her sister attended another state university). During high school Christina was in a fashion program and her teacher "would always ask us where are you guys applying?" and "mentioned University A quite a bit." Christina and the members of her school's fashion program also took a class trip to the University for a fashion show. The fact that University A was the only school in the state that offered Christina's program and that out-of-state tuition was very expensive were the main reasons she chose the university. Her sister also worked at University A and her brother in law went to school there, which somewhat influenced her choice.

Transitioning to University A. Christina's high school and neighborhood were very diverse, which made the transition to a predominantly White university challenging. Christina said she "felt different" because she was never

> exposed to predominantly White schools or institutions or anything like that. And so I never really paid attention to it, but when I got here it was really hard because it's like I walked into the classrooms and you saw no one that you could identify with in a sense...So I didn't feel I could be me, I didn't feel accepted, I felt different.

To Christina, the biggest part of her feeling different was that "no one really tried to talk to me, no one—and I don't know exactly for what reason, but it, the reason that made the most sense [was] because I didn't look like most of them." Half of Christina's classes were made up of 30-40 students and the other half were large lecture style courses. She noticed being different most in the smaller classes. In a "classroom of say 30" there were maybe five racially minoritized students.

As a freshman Christina lived in a residence hall that was further away from campus than others, so it was very "community based." Living on campus helped her establish some connections and a small community where she felt comfortable. Christina's roommate was her high school best friend and they also met five or six other people on their floor they "got along with really well." Even though she was roommates with her best friend, they "didn't have a whole lot of friends here on campus so we would go home." Christina went home basically every weekend because she got "homesick a lot because I am very close to my family."

Overall, Christina struggled to transition to college. Her experiences "walking into classrooms, whether that's for a class or a club meeting or something and just kind of looking around and feeling unwelcome in a sense" added to the stress of missing her family and caused her to feel "alone sometimes too." All of these things caused her to lack a feeling of belonging on the campus. Furthermore, "trying to find where I belonged kind of just took a toll on me." During this time she "was like, I don't know if I should be here."

Organizational involvement. Christina was not involved in campus organizations in high school, but when she came to University A, she "made it my

mission to." In fact, during Christina's first semester she "did too much" and joined several organizations including Kappa Beta, a fashion magazine club, and a Latinx event planning group that "plan[s] the Latino graduation ceremony and the Latino leadership event." She also joined the BELIEVE organization where the members "go out to high schools and middle schools and talk to students about higher education and do workshops with them."

Christina became involved in Kappa Beta after going to the University welcome event that featured campus organizations. Her sister previously told her about multicultural Greek organizations, though she never joined one herself. Meeting a group of Latinas was

> very exciting...And after just meeting with them and making that connection, I started learning more about the actual sorority and I was like…our beliefs are the same…I guess you could say I found a home away from home.

Sense of belonging. Christina did not feel a sense of belonging on the campus as a whole "for a really long time" when she first began at University A, but this changed when she attended the Latinx Leadership Event during her first semester. The Latinx Leadership Event connected her to other Latinx students on campus that she could relate to and begin forming a community with. The event was the first place she recalled feeling a sense of belonging. In fact she "met most of my friends there" and "most of my line sisters were there." Even though her sense of belonging was compartmentalized to that space and "not the campus as a whole," it gave her a sense of new energy and connected her to some friends.

Christina felt a sense of belonging within Kappa Beta from "the first time I met them." She originally considered joining other Greek organizations, but did not feel the same connection because the members of Kappa Beta made more of an effort to get to know Christina.

Davina

Davina is a 19 year old Mexican female in her third semester at University A majoring in Civil Engineering. Davina was the first member of her immediate family to attend college. During middle school Davina had some cousins in high school that were involved in a program called STEM Forward that provided a 4-year tuition scholarship to University A and support for students pursuing STEM majors in college. Her cousins helped Davina get into the program by telling the staff members about her. Beyond STEM Forward, Davina did not really talk to her cousins about college, but her parents often persuaded her to go. Through STEM Forward and another program called Jump Ahead, Davina visited two local colleges in addition to University A. During one of their visits to University A, the students stayed in the residence halls and did "different workshops to see how it would be and the different resources that we had on campus to support us." Davina "wanted to be an engineer" and liked that University A was "a good engineering school." It was also only 30 minutes away from her family's home. By the time Davina started college she had been to University A many times. Even though she was a little scared at first, her visits reaffirmed her choice to attend University A.

Transitioning to University A. Davina's high school was made up of about 1000 students and included a pretty even mix of racially minoritized and White students. For Davina, coming to a predominantly White school, "was a major culture shock" because she saw that she was in the minority. She expressed, "I knew people labeled us as a

minority, but I didn't see it with my eyes until I got here basically." Davina thought that seeing this was "kind of weird at first, but then I just shook it off."

Coming into University A, Davina had a connection to a community she was comfortable with through the STEM Forward program. In her first year, the STEM Forward program required participants to attend a weekly seminar focused on "easy transitions into college." She described it as "they kind of babysit us for the first year basically." As an extension of the seminar, members would also "do socials and things like that." After getting to know each other over these years, Davina felt like she belonged with her STEM Forward peers.

Davina currently lived in an on campus apartment, and also lived in a residential hall as a freshman. In one way she "loved living on campus" because she liked "the convenience." However forming a community in her residence hall was challenging because she "was really shy" and "I think like my floor for sure was mostly White girls that were in White sororities so they didn't really talk to me." Davina did however bond with one of her neighbors, and they decided halfway through the year to room together. Forming a bond with her neighbor was important in helping Davina feel more at home in her hall because "her [roommate's] friends became my friends as well…that's what made my residence hall my home as well." The residence hall hosted events to try to connect other students together, but these did not play a role in Davina's experience because "they didn't really come and reach out to me and my roommate to like come and be a part of it I guess."

Organizational involvement. During high school, Davina was not involved in campus organizations beyond playing tennis because "we didn't really have that." So

coming to University A, she did not plan on joining student organizations, but "I was just looking for a place to fit in." Davina was very close to her family, which made the transition process to living away from home difficult. She felt that it was "the biggest thing that impacted me." Her first semester was "just me going back and forth going home." However she soon started to realize she was spending a lot of money on gas and that she needed to make her college town "my home." About a month into her first semester she decided to attend the University's organization fair where they featured "lots of clubs and organizations." Davina went thinking "I'll find my group of people I guess and see where I fit in and what I like."

At the time her cousin was the president of the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) and told her to go to the event and visit with MASO. Davina went and although she "did kind of click with the people…they were kind of older so they weren't really paying attention to the little freshman." So she continued to look. She knew that some volunteers for the Jump Ahead program were Greek, but she "didn't really know what it meant or what they did on campus." While at the fair, Davina "recognized one of the girls" from Jump Ahead, which was a member of Kappa Beta. When talking to the members, Davina immediately felt comfortable. The fact that they were all Latinas also helped Davina feel a connection with them. She joined their email list and was invited to an informational, but was the only one to attend. Still, she listened to them as they explained what "their sorority was, what they stood for and all that stuff." Afterward they invited her to get frozen yogurt with them and from there she decided to join as an interest. There were other multicultural Greek sororities on campus, but Kappa Beta's "principles stood out to me the most. And then the sisters as well."

Sense of belonging. When Davina first started at University A she did not feel a sense of belonging within the greater campus community, "because I did feel kind of small in a way, like I said it was kind of a culture shock because I wasn't used to it." When Davina was having trouble finding her community on campus, there were two areas on campus that she considered places of belonging—the Multicultural Center and TRIO SSSP. She first learned about these services through the Jump Ahead program. Despite having these spaces, Davina still felt lonely in her first year because she would go there and then "would stick to myself again. Because I didn't really know anybody." Ultimately, Davina's lack of belonging stemmed from her lack of community.

When Davina first joined Kappa Beta, she felt a sense of belonging "right away." Davina emphasized that one particular sister "made the biggest impact on me." Davina did not "have an older sister, but I feel like she was the first one that actually took me kind of under her wing and looked out for me in a way and actually treated me like a person compared to my past friends." Davina also noted that she also loved all of her sisters. When she met them, "they made me feel comfortable and they made me feel welcomed." There was never a time Davina did not feel a sense of belonging with Kappa Beta.

Nine

Nine is a 21 year old female Latina in her seventh semester at University A majoring in Psychology. Nine is from a city about an hour away from University A. She was the second in her immediate family to attend college, her brother went to University A a year before she graduated high school. Initially, she "wanted to go into nursing" at another state university, but when she visited the campus she "didn't like it at all." After

visiting University A, she “loved it” and changed her major to psychology. She was admitted into “a bridge program the summer I graduated from high school” that provided a full tuition scholarship. The program, Summit, was “kind of like an immersion program for multicultural students to get used to college, take free classes and learn about resources.”

In the end, Nine came to University A “because 1. the money, and 2. the bridge program.” In addition, “my brother was also here so I kind of already had someone I could go to and the campus was just really really pretty.” During the bridge program, Nine “was able to immerse myself in University A while being around other multicultural students which was really nice because I got to know the campus when I actually got here the first week of school.”

Transitioning to University A. Nine went to a “small Catholic high school” consisting of about 300 students that were predominantly White. Nine added, “I was probably one of 5 Hispanic/Latino students other than like my sister and brother so it was really small.” In some ways coming into University A, Nine actually saw more diversity “just because I had been used to not seeing that in my high school.” However she further explained that her “city it is pretty diverse and…my parents friends and things like that are all Latino so that was a little bit different that I wouldn’t be able to be around like my Latino comfort zone.” She began noticing the lack of racially minoritized students on campus when she was on her own away from the Summit students. She recalled, “it was the first week of school and I just looked around and I didn’t have those 60 people that became my family around me. And we were just like oh my gosh this is crazy.” As a freshman, Nine “was just uncomfortable being with myself in general.” Nine reflected

that she had a strong awareness of being alone and thought other students on campus seemed to notice as well.

Nine was also involved in the TRIO Student Support Services Program. She found out about the program through one of her brother's friends and wanted to take advantage of the resources they offered. So she applied, interviewed, and was accepted. Besides a Latino studies class she was taking, the TRIO SSSP Office became "another place where I was able to find other people."

Nine currently lives off campus, but as a freshman she lived in a campus residence hall. She, "honestly really didn't like living in the dorms." Nine described, "I just kind of was there. I didn't feel out of place, but I didn't necessarily feel like I was home." The residence hall had some initiatives to get students involved such as a "hall government" type thing, but Nine's "floor just wasn't really involved in stuff."

Organizational involvement. Beyond "a sport here and there," Nine was not really involved in student organizations during high school "because there wasn't any campus activities" since her school was so small. When she came to University A she "definitely" planned on joining a student organization. During her freshman year she became involved in multiple organizations, which she learned about at the university's organization fair as well as another organization showcase event sponsored by the Multicultural Center. For instance, she joined the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) "for a little bit" and also became involved with the Latinx Leadership Event Committee's initiatives.

Nine learned about Latinx Greek life because her brother joined a Latinx fraternity. At first she thought it was "weird" that he joined, but "then he told me 'oh it's

a Latino fraternity' and I was like 'oh cool I didn't know that.'" So when Nine "came to campus I knew I wanted to be involved." At the time there were two Latinx based sororities on campus so she went to check them out. However she just did not feel the connection "right away." She attended the Latinx Leadership event on campus and during the event one of Nine's friends told her a new sorority was starting and asked if she wanted to go to a meeting to learn more. Inevitably Nine decided to join and start working together on the process to construct a proposal "to get accepted into Kappa Beta as an interest group and then accepted into University A."

Nine bonded with the other girls in the interest group and thought part of that was because she has two younger sisters, but never had an older sister, which was "something I've always wanted." Even though her brother came to University A before her, she thought he somewhat "just threw me into the lion's den." She thought "it would've been nice if someone helped me a little bit. So I had them. Most of all the girls were older than me so I just became close to them from that bond." In fact, Nine "was the youngest person in my line of 10 so that was really cool to have people older than me, guiding me." During Nine's fall semester the group presented to enter the MGC at University A. They were told in January that they were accepted and in April they officially became an organization and crossed.

Sense of belonging. When Nine first began at University A, she recalled feeling a sense of belonging during her Latino studies class and within the TRIO SSSP Office, but beyond that it was limited. She "never felt completely ostracized" on campus—particularly because she did not believe her phenotype was easily recognizable as Latinx. It was difficult for her to say, but she ultimately "never necessarily felt uncomfortable,

but I also never necessarily felt like 100% this is where I'm supposed to be."

Though she experienced some challenges at the beginning of her experience, Nine has felt a sense of belonging in Kappa Beta "the entire time." Nine partially attributes her sense of belonging to the fact that her sisters are "knowledgeable about social justice issues." Nine felt like being with her sisters was a sort of "safe space" where she could feel "comfortable just saying whatever I want and if I say something wrong they'll correct me without being mad at me."

Paloma

Paloma is a 19 year old Mexican female in her third semester at University A majoring in Kinesiology and Health. Even though Paloma is Mexican, she has

> light skin so a lot of people don't identify me as Mexican right away…So it's like I have to explain like yeah I'm Mexican, my parents are from Mexico I speak Spanish and all of that. And they're just like oh I thought you were White.

However her identity was an important part of her and she wished people would recognize her as a Latinx because it is something she was proud of.

Paloma went to a private high school that had "less than 7 Latinos and there was only like 3 that actually spoke Spanish. So it was kind of like I was always surrounded by people who were different from me." During high school Paloma "was really really shy. I felt like I couldn't really be myself or say certain things or do certain things." She also did not feel like she could freely communicate "because sometimes I speak a lot of Spanglish." Although her high school friends were "really accepting…other students in my high school were like oh speak Spanish or something like that. I felt like I was just entertaining them…So I kept to myself a lot."

Paloma had two older siblings and was the third in her family to go to college. Her brother, Jonathan, was the first to go to college. Their sister, Cynthia, was the next to go and "through my brother she quickly met a bunch of people in the Latino community and quickly became involved." While Paloma was still in high school, Cynthia "would invite me over to University A and I would hang out with her and she would take me to events and stuff like that."

During high school, Paloma somewhat doubted her ability to succeed in college because she did not think her high school prepared her for college. She did not have the opportunity to "explore a lot of different options" in terms of a future career so she was unsure of her major. Because of all this she suggested to her mom that she "just go to a community college" first. However Paloma's mom reasoned that she should just go to University A because she already had a scholarship that paid her tuition. Though she was not sure exactly what her major would be, Paloma wanted to pursue something in the health field because she "had a lot of past experience of me going through the healthcare field with therapy, surgery, a bunch of other things." Midway through Paloma's first semester, her advisor helped her sign up for different classes to explore her options. In addition, conversations with her physical therapist "inspired" Paloma to pursue kinesiology.

Transitioning to University A. Paloma's siblings were part of support programs for students including SUMMIT, a bridge program for multicultural students, and TRIO SSSP. They told Paloma about them and she became involved too. Being part of these programs helped Paloma identify and use resources the campus had to offer. As part of SUMMIT, Paloma "came into college the summer before the actual semester started."

Paloma was excited about the prospect of being around other multicultural students because

> I was never really exposed to so it was kind of like really different. It was like really fun and I really got to learn more different cultures that are on campus as well as understand that just being minority students...they kind of share the same struggles.

Through her involvement in SUMMIT, "I knew the resources, where to go to ask for help, all these things. Like what college life is kind of like." During SUMMIT, Paloma also met her "first two friends" at the University, which later became her line sisters in Kappa Beta.

Based on her high school experiences, when Paloma entered University A she already had "the notion that I can't be myself." She knew that she could easily connect with other "multicultural or Latino" students, but thought that "other people probably don't understand…what I say or what I'm accustomed to." However using the SSSP Office, Paloma was able to easily connect with members of the Latinx community. Paloma was also able to build her community through her involvement in a Multicultural Student Scholarship program she was part of because the recipients shared things in common and could easily connect with each other.

Organizational involvement. Paloma never considered joining a traditional Greek letter organization, but she did consider joining another multicultural Greek organization, mainly because her sister was one of the founding members of Kappa Beta and she "did not want to always follow in her sister's footsteps." However after meeting more of the Kappa Beta sisters, Paloma thought they were all really nice. She saw the

sisterhood they shared and wanted to be part of it. In summary, Paloma "was like low key like always knew I would go Kappa Beta, but wanted to explore other options."

Sense of belonging. Beyond being within her communities such as Kappa Beta and with other students at the Multicultural Center, Paloma could not think of a time she felt a sense of belonging within the greater campus community when she started at University A. Paloma's sense of belonging in Kappa Beta began with her bond with her interest group and grew from there. Paloma considered Kappa Beta "a community I feel close to and like I belong to." When she was with her sisters, she felt "accepted" and knew that "I can be myself with them and it's like I know I'm not going to be judged." Regardless of the setting, when Paloma was with her sisters, she felt comfortable.

Delta

Delta is a 25 year old Hispanic/Latinx male in his seventh semester at University A majoring in Mechanical Engineering. Delta was born in Mexico and came to the U.S. when he was about 10 years old. His parents were born and raised in Mexico, and due to the limitations of transportation there, their highest level of education was elementary school. He was a first-generation college student.

Transitioning to University A. Since Delta was a first generation college student he did not originally have college on his mind, but began thinking about his next steps as he graduated high school. After asking his parents for their advice they basically said "we never had that opportunity so we really can't give you too much feedback. But whatever you decide to do we'll support you either way." Delta decided to start at community college and was there for three years. During that time, he became involved in several student organizations even though he originally planned to just focus his time on his

academics. During November of his third year one of the associate deans for student support took the time to talk to him about his options for transfer and shared her similar experiences of being a first generation college student. She suggested University A—which was an out-of-state option for Delta—and another university in the state he lived in. Both options were about three hours away from his family's home. He applied to both, but "heard better things about University A" and things worked out for him to go there, including receiving enough scholarships to even out the out of state tuition he had to pay.

Delta's community college campus was "predominantly White," though there were a few students from other racial groups including Latinxs. However his transition to University A was still very challenging. He attributed his difficult transition to his move to a "university away from home," which only one other cousin had done at the time. Delta was close to his family, he explained, "coming from a collectivist culture , I was used to seeing every member of the family at least once a week so being away from that was a big cultural shock."

Things did not get better once he actually attended the campus. Delta "got stuck" in University housing located about 10 to 15 minutes away from campus by bus and was not very close with his three roommates. He was part of TRIO Student Support Services, which provided useful services and required meetings with assigned advisors, but still did had trouble transitioning.

Delta described,

> my first two weeks were really difficult. I did not like it at all. I remember walking to my apartment and being close to breaking out in tears. I wasn't adjusting…The issue was actually having that social network at University A.

> And since I didn't have that, I would just go to class, the library, go back home and read—I really wasn't getting too involved

Organizational involvement. Delta's struggles turned around when one of his second cousins who was also attending a different university texted him asking, "hey how are you at University A? How's it going? How are you doing? And then she suggested a few clubs and organizations to get involved with." Her husband was also a member of Omega Iota and asked Delta "if it was ok for her to tell him to reach out to the chapter at University A. I told her yeah why not?... shortly afterwards the guys at University A got a hold of me." After being invited to stop by an organizational fair sponsored by the university and a cookout with the brothers, Delta "saw a group of individuals where we all shared a common background, were all facing or had faced the same struggles, and we were all aiming to do something more. So at that point decided to join these guys." Delta went through the new member process and crossed in his first semester. He was not aware of other Latinx Greek Letter fraternities on campus prior to joining, but this did not seem to have bothered him.

That semester Delta also ended up joining a Latinx based Engineering Club. However joining a Latinx based organization was actually a little bit "weird" for Delta at first. He also did not get a sense of the "makeshift family" that they described, so he opted to become more involved in Omega Iota since he did feel that connection there. During his second semester, he also joined a transfer support organization because he wanted to help prevent other students from a negative transition like the one he experienced. Delta stayed involved in the organization for two years and then stepped

away from the organization when he "picked up further leadership involvement with my fraternity. I didn't have a whole lot of time to dedicate to that organization anymore."

Sense of belonging. Delta did not feel a sense of belonging within the university as a whole in the first year he was at University A. When Delta "had a class, I would always aim to sit in the front, I really wouldn't socialize with a lot of students." Delta also "used to walk around campus questioning what am I doing here?" The first time he felt a sense of belonging on campus was when he became involved in his fraternity and "started feeling like I mattered." Delta felt a sense of belonging in Omega Iota even before he joined. When he first met some of the members he believed they were "individuals that shared a similar background with me, we were all facing the same challenges or had faced them and we all wanted to not necessarily do more, but be more."

Romeo

Romeo is a 20 year old Hispanic male in his fifth semester at University A majoring in Civil Engineering. Romeo did not originally intend to go to college, instead he "wanted to join the military." After enlisting in the Air National Guard, he "was denied for a high frequency hearing loss in my right ear." A few of Romeo's friends decided to go to college. Romeo and his friends were "taking all these engineering courses so we decided to go to an engineering school…And that's what led me to go to University A."

Because Romeo's parents did not go to college, he "didn't know who to go to" for information regarding things like "taking the ACT." Overall, "the application process for college was really difficult" for Romeo. He asserted that he "lack[ed] information...and I missed out on a lot of opportunities because of [that] lack of information." Fortunately

Romeo had friends that also went through the process with him. They tried to help each other whenever they could. Romeo did however become part of a TRIO SSSP program. With help from the program, Romeo applied and was awarded a "scholarship which covers half of your tuition for the first year."

Transitioning to University A. Romeo thought that the transition from high school to college "felt normal," but he did not like being "so far away from home. So immediately I tried to find people with similar backgrounds or similar characteristics as myself." Romeo's search for people that were similar to himself was why he chose to live in a residence hall with two of the friends he came from high school with. He said, "we all stuck together and really didn't branch out to the communities in University A since we were brand new." He explained that they were

> all first generation students so we didn't really know much…Just knowing that we had each other and having each other's back and that support between us really strengthened all three of us I believe. And kind of gave us that feeling that hey we can do this, like no man left behind, if I'm going to make it so are you.

On his residence application, Romeo indicated that he was interested in being part of a learning community. Romeo was admitted to one "for incoming freshmen that identify as minority students as well as engineering majors." However his roommates "didn't qualify for it" so they were not in the learning community classes. In terms of his sense of connectedness and belonging to the university, Romeo thought that being part of the learning community "helped tremendously."

Organizational involvement. In high school, Romeo participated in sports, but was not involved in other campus organizations. When he came to University A, he did

not plan to join a student organization, “but it happened.” In fact, during his first semester he, “got involved in a lot of things.” Even beginning with orientation Romeo met one of the advisors of the Latinx Science and Engineering Organization (LSEO) and he suggested that Romeo attend their meetings. When Romeo met the members of the organization, he thought that they were all “very welcoming” and shared “similar backgrounds, similar experiences” as Romeo. He added that “seeing another Hispanic or Latino male on campus or female for that matter, just seeing them speaking Spanish just kind of really, gave me a sense of security.”

The summer before Romeo went to University A, he “met one of the original founders” of the Nu Sigma chapter at University A and later met more through TRIO and LSEO after arriving to campus. Romeo also met other members and they all “reached out to me and said hey do you know about this, or welcome to University you should do this… just showing me the doors of college, like a how to.” Furthermore, several of them were from Romeo’s hometown, so that was another commonality they shared. Romeo “never thought I would join an organization such as a fraternity, just knowing the negative stereotypes.” However his experience with Nu Sigma was different. It was a group of people that he could talk to and relate to through shared experiences. There was another Latinx based fraternity on campus, and “the other guys did reach out to me,” but Romeo “only knew one of them” compared to the “probably 7 out of the 12 members” that he knew in Nu Sigma. So for him, it was “really just that familiarity that we had before we even stepped foot on University A campus.” Romeo joined his fraternity during his sophomore year along with his other roommates from his freshman year.

Sense of belonging. When Romeo first began at University A, he was able to make connections through his learning communities and felt connected by a "professor that reached out to me." However, beyond those spaces, Romeo did not feel a sense of belonging to the greater University "because if I disappeared I don't think anybody would have noticed." Romeo's sense a belonging within Nu Sigma began when he was an interest and has carried forward to today—particularly because he currently held a leadership position in his organization.

Fernando

Fernando is a 20 year old Hispanic male completing his fifth semester at University A majoring in Mechanical Engineering. Fernando's other siblings went to community colleges and received certifications and training for their jobs, but he was the first in his immediate family to pursue a four year degree.

Transitioning to University A. Fernando originally intended to attend a community college near his home, but was pushed by family (particularly his brother) and close teachers to apply to University A. Fernando really only looked at University A because it was close to home and had his major.

His high school was made up of about 200-450 students, most of which were White students. Yet even though the school was predominantly White, Fernando "surrounded myself around multicultural students…I didn't hang out too much with Caucasians." So when he came to University A it was "shocking because the population, like you don't really see people of Color here." Fernando's classes were also "not diverse at all." He explained, "first there are a lot of guys. That's how engineering is I guess. But other than that it's just a lot of White people."

Organizational involvement. Fernando was not heavily involved in student organizations in high school so when he came to University A he did not necessarily plan to join one—it "kind of just happened." He started by being involved in his residence hall governing board. Even though he had a position, he still did not feel like an important part because "I was like the only Hispanic so I was—I would try to talk to them, but I just don't [sic] feel the connection. We just don't talk about the same things." Fernando also tried to become involved on campus by becoming a student government senator, "but I dropped that position just for the fact that they don't do anything that appeals to me and the multicultural students."

When Fernando came to University A he sort of "attached" himself to friends he knew from his hometown "because I didn't really know anybody else." Although he was friends with his White roommate, "we didn't always click." So he decided to go along with his hometown friends when they invited him to attend one of Nu Sigma's informationals where they learned more about the organization. Fernando joined the interest group for Nu Sigma his first semester and crossed in the spring. He thought the active members of Nu Sigma

> were welcoming. And seeing them there gave me a spark of, wow these guys have already been here, they have knowledge I can use them in a way for the resources they have and what they already know having been here longer than I have and basically knowing the ropes.

Although there was another Latinx-based multicultural fraternity on campus as well he was not interested in exploring that organization "once I got insight on Nu Sigma…I was

like I'm not just gonna look into something else when I already like this, I like what they do, I like who they are, I'm not going to look anywhere else."

During the spring of Fernando's first year he also joined another Latinx based organization sponsored by several resources on campus who work with both retention and multicultural affairs. The organization hosted two main events, one was a Latinx Leadership event for freshman and transfer students that he attended in the fall where "they have workshops on leadership, community, academics, professionalism" and mainly "just to get the Latinos to mingle. So they actually get to meet people that have similar backgrounds." The other event was a Latinx graduation ceremony hosted in Spanish for students and their families.

Sense of belonging. When Fernando first started at University A, the only time he felt a sense of belonging within the greater campus community outside of his organizations was at a welcome event for incoming freshman. In this event there were, "organizations tabled around and playing games and stuff." To Fernando, the reason he felt belonging there was because "there was a lot of energy that day, everyone's just happy and just going around talking to each other…clicks hadn't formed yet…They were just there willing to talk to anybody." The interactions Fernando experienced during the welcome event were unusual from what Fernando experienced on campus day to day. He thought the students as a whole "avoid interaction."

In terms of his fraternity, Fernando felt a sense of belonging in Nu Sigma even as an interest. He described,

> I already felt like I belonged just for the fact that [active members] would reach out to me and ask how my classes are doing. When I would say 'oh this class is

> hard and blah blah blah,' they would say 'oh I already took this class, whenever you want to meet up and study I can help you.' That right away was like, it was, I felt the acceptance.

Hector

Hector is a 19 year old Mexican American male in his third semester at University A majoring in Computer Engineering with a leadership studies certificate. Hector was the first in his immediate family to attend college.

Hector had the opportunity to complete community college credits during his junior and senior year of high school including a computer technology networking course where he met Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith made computer engineering seem fun and spurred Hector to begin thinking about what major he would pursue in college. Being in classes with Ms. Smith also provided Hector the opportunity to visit University A through a computer engineering competition they attended at the University. During his junior and senior years, Hector also had the opportunity to attend field trips to visit University A. One program was specifically for Latinxs, in which the students were picked up from their schools to tour the University. During this and other visits, Hector had the chance to "see what kind of programs they have, what kind of opportunities they have, what kind of scholarships they provide, especially for diverse students."

One opportunity, the Multicultural Student Scholarship (MSS), provided four years of paid tuition to University A. The MSS stood out to Hector and he applied. He "was conflicted over the decision to attend a "community college and work my way up to a university" or to "go straight to a university." He was also originally looking at another university that he visited first before high school. Ultimately he chose to attend University A because he was awarded the MSS and visited campus multiple times and

"got a good sense" of the campus. Hector also reasoned that University A was "not too far away from my home, so I wouldn't get homesick." Finally, it was comforting to know that "some of my old friends were coming here." Hector attended the University orientation before his first semester and met one of the staff members from the leadership studies program. After hearing about the certificate, Hector decided to add it to his program because his advisor said it was good "to branch out."

Transitioning to University A. When Hector arrived at University A, one space where he cultivated a sense of community was in his Multicultural Student Scholarship program. Each semester MSS required participants to take a class in which students completed projects and got to know each other. The focus of the readings and journals were also mostly focused on diversity related issues. In addition, MSS hosted social events where students were invited to "connect with one another."

Hector currently lived off campus with roommates, one of which is his line brother. As a freshman he lived on campus in a residence hall and was a member of "a learning community of computer engineers." He described living in the dorms as "a great time" and believed it helped his transition to college, particularly because "on the first day when I moved in I already made friends." Hector connected with a friend from high school and other racially diverse students in his hall. Hector also made friends within his own learning community, including his roommate. Throughout the year his residence hall hosted activities to try to get people to know each other and Hector attended "mostly all of them." Overall Hector "felt at home" and did not really experience homesickness "because home wasn't that far away" and he had developed a community within University A.

Despite the fact that Hector quickly connected to other students, he still experienced some "culture shock" when he arrived. Hector's high school was made up of about 1000-2000 students and the racial composition was predominantly White. Yet, he still saw a lot of diversity there. Coming into a place where "most of my classes were predominantly White and I only would see like one or two diverse students in it I was like oh wow. Very small world here."

Organizational involvement. Hector attended organization fairs and other events "looking for any Hispanic clubs, Latino Clubs, any diversity club with Latinos or Hispanics in it so I could make my connections there and meet some people." Hector recalled attending one particular organization fair event. He spotted one of the MSS staff members who was finishing her master's at University A and was part of a Latinx sorority on campus. She pointed Hector toward the brothers of Omega Iota, which was when Hector "met one of my brothers…and he told me more about the fraternity and the diversity and the culture and everything." When Hector met the brothers of Omega Iota, he was excited to hear that nationally, the fraternity had a lot of diverse members from all different backgrounds. Hector did "not really" consider joining another Latinx based fraternity on campus because for one, he met the members of Omega Iota first. Second, his fraternity "had more of a sense of diversity." Hector crossed "at the very end" of his first semester.

Hector's initiative to seek out campus organizations worked out for him. During Hector's first year he joined several student organizations in addition to Omega Iota. One was the Latinx Science and Engineering Organization (LSEO). He was also part of the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO), which was "another Latino based

organization club." In addition, Hector joined the Research Now organization which provides students the opportunity to "research with a professor."

Sense of belonging. Hector felt a sense of belonging within the University A campus since he started. He noted that "making friends on the first day just kicked it in." Hector also felt a sense of belonging within Omega Iota from the beginning, but it "felt slow" because it took time for him to get to know the other members. However through the membership process, Hector had the opportunity "to get to know them, to know their history, know why they came to University A."

Juan

Juan is a 21 year old Mexican-American male in his seventh semester University A majoring in Environmental Science. In terms of college preparation, Juan had "older cousins who went through college but the age gap was so big I never really connected with those cousins so the whole experience was new." Luckily as a 7th grader, Juan joined the STEM Forward program. The program helped prepare participants for college, exposed them to different majors and careers in STEM, and also provided a four-year tuition scholarship to University A. He added that without the STEM Forward program "I would probably have gone to a community college first." During STEM Forward, Juan also had a peer mentor for "the majority of time I was in high school and my sophomore year of college" that was a member of Omega Iota who later "convinced me to join."

As part of the STEM Forward program, the students visited the University A campus twice every semester. So by the time he began at University A, Juan "felt comfortable with the locations of the buildings on campus." However because all of the visits were on the weekends, Juan "never got the opportunity to see the campus during

the day during the week…So I never got to see a full campus before actually starting classes." Experiencing campus on a normal academic weekday was very different from his weekend visits and caused Juan to "feel a lot smaller on campus." STEM Forward assisted students with class schedules and other details to transition to college. When they began at University A, they also "had two semesters of seminar" in addition to study hours in a designated area.

Transitioning to University A. Juan's high school was made up of over 2000 students, which included an even mix of racially minoritized students and White students. When he transitioned to University A, "the biggest difference I saw was the diversity on the campus…to go from about half the class being different ethnicities and races to being the only one in your class that is of Color is a big change." To compound on this experience, Juan switched his major to the environmental science program after his first semester. Switching majors was difficult because "everyone already formed their groups of friends… So it took me about a year to kind of wiggle my way into a friend group." Juan reflected that he began noticing being different from his peers even more during the first semester of his junior year when he began 400 level courses that only had 30-40 students, sometimes less than two or three of which were racially minoritized students.

As a freshman, Juan "roomed with two of my friends from high school," which he noted "were both White." Beyond that, Juan "didn't really have that group of people to hang out with outside of STEM Forward." During that year Juan "spent most of my time either in my dorm or the library." He did not really make any friends in his dorm outside of his roommates. The residence hall had "weekly floor meetings" and once they "threw a

mixer… but I just would go with my two friends and left with my two friends." The event was also "uncomfortable" for Juan because he did not know anyone there."

Organizational involvement. Even though Juan was involved in campus organizations in high school, he did not necessarily intend to join a student organization at University A. He "thought I just wanted to go to school, like that was it. I wanted to focus." So during his "first semester I didn't join anything, but I was having too much free time and I was getting into things I shouldn't have been doing. And so I figured well what's the difference, oh I had a job, oh I was in an organization, I should probably do those."

Juan was also looking for a group of friends he could connect with and that shared similar backgrounds as he did. So midway through his second semester he "tried joining some culturally based clubs" including the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO). However Juan thought, "the club was super disorganized, I didn't like it. So I only did that for a year." Structurally, MASO struggled with dividing tasks equally among the members. Juan felt that he "had too much responsibility without having an official title." During the second semester of his sophomore year Juan also "tried joining MALS, which is a minority club for students in Agriculture and Life Sciences but the same issue –it was just poorly structured." He stopped going to MALS after just two meetings. Juan noted that it may have just been poor leadership at the time, but he continued to "see the same issues so I don't think there was much officer training involved."

Coming into college, Juan "didn't really know anything about Greek life." He considered joining another Greek letter organization at one point during his freshman

year, “but it was for the wrong reasons.” He explained that the purpose of the organization and Juan’s connection with the members did not have a deeper value to him beyond the party scene. He discussed “some issues I was going through” with his STEM Forward mentor, who was a member of Omega Iota. Although his mentor never “really pushed” joining the organization, he noted “if you want to refocus, we can help you do that.” Juan saw joining “as an opportunity to kind of take a step back and focus only on my schooling and fraternity.” Juan explained that his mentor “really sold how focused everyone is in his organization and how willing they are, they’re willing to do a lot to graduate.” The members’ commitment to academics was appealing to Juan.

Joining the organization “was definitely scary because I didn’t know any of the guys, but at the same time it was exciting.” After meeting the other members, Juan thought it was easy for them to connect with one another because they were all “minorities in college. So some of the struggles we were going through in like the class thing and like and … we were all minorities who wanted to graduate and occupied their free time by doing some good stuff in the community. That’s what I liked.” Juan crossed in Omega Iota in Spring 2015, which was his “second semester of my sophomore year.”

Sense of belonging. During Juan’s freshman year the only sense of belonging he had on campus was with his intramural sports team and when he participated in STEM Forward events—“outside of that I didn’t really feel like I was connected to the campus.” When Juan joined Omega Iota he “felt comfortable really quick.” He attributed this to “having similar interests and having similar backgrounds.”

Karla

Karla is a 19 year old Mexican female in her third semester at University B majoring in Biochemistry. Karla was not the first in her immediate family to attend college. Karla's dad completed his undergraduate and master's degree while he and Karla's family were living in Mexico. He came to University B with a Fulbright scholarship to complete his "PhD in plant genetics" and brought the family along.

In the 5th grade, Karla came to the United States and "didn't know any English—it was pretty rough. It was a diverse elementary school, but mostly White people. But I just thought it was fine, everybody was really nice to me so I didn't really mind." She went to two other schools, one of which was a public high school that was very diverse, before transitioning to a private Catholic school that was made up of about 200-450 students, which were "mostly White people and then not very many Hispanics or people of Color." However Karla "never really minded because…I guess interacted with everybody."

Once Karla's dad completed his doctorate, Karla's family went back to Mexico. However since Karla was "going to start college, I decided to stay." So while her parents went back to Mexico, Karla stayed with a family friend. Her older brother was already attending University B so he stayed as well. Her mom came back to help

> settle us in. And then once I started college we got our own apartment and then my brother went back to Mexico but then I stayed here and I just live alone with a roommate…So I'm here alone. But I have a lot of family friends and a lot of support so it doesn't really feel like I'm away from my family.

Karla wanted to attend University B because she was familiar with the city and wanted to "to be close to my friends." She also "really wanted to be in the marching band." After applying for scholarships, she was awarded one that covered most of her tuition.

Transitioning to University B. Being a Biochemistry major was "really hard the first year…but it went well." University B is a predominantly White institution, however there are also fewer racially minoritized students in STEM majors, which explains why Karla did not see "much diversity" in her courses. Looking around, Karla "did think about it," but she also "like[d] being different and I like to try new things and I like to challenge myself." Karla also did not think that living off campus really altered her sense of belonging because she is from the city University B is located in and "already had a lot of friends and most of them were already living at home off campus. And because I was also very involved I got to meet a lot of people."

Organizational involvement. Starting her freshman year, Karla became involved in several campus organizations. Of course coming into the university Karla tried out and was admitted to the marching band—which she was "always so enthusiastic about." In addition she also joined a club sports team after attending the large university organization fair at the beginning of the semester and later joined the Biochemistry Club.

Karla's interest in being involved in Pi Delta was actually sparked during her freshman or sophomore year of high school. At the time, one of the members of Pi Delta started an organization called Latina Leaders at Karla's high school. In the organization they "talked about community service and how important it is and things you should do before you get to college to be prepared. And we would also talk about what we struggled

on school wise or just at home." One of Karla's teachers mentioned it, but she was not really interested in joining at first because there was another Latinx based club at her school where "only the ghetto kids went." She clarified,

> in high school, there were a lot of Hispanics, but I didn't really talk to them because we were like, I guess different. Maybe because I was like raised in a family that valued education a lot. And they were more of the like gangster type like Cholo type thing.

However one of her friends gave her a flyer and Karla decided to start attending the meetings with one of her best friends. The group was made up of about "six people. So it was small…and we all knew each other so it was pretty comfortable talking to everybody."

Karla thought the member of Pi Delta was "just an amazing person and also gave us guidance and advice for college." During the meetings she "would talk about University B and would always talk about her sorority. And I thought it was the coolest thing ever. And I was like when I go to college my target is going to be on that sorority." Then when Karla came to University B,

> one of my good friends was also in the sorority, but she's a year older than I am. And then her sister was one of the founders that established the sorority here on campus. So I guess I was always around those people and I always, I was really like excited to join it. So I did my freshman year, like the end of my freshman year.

At the time Karla considered joining her sorority, it was the only active one on campus—the other Latinx sorority had been suspended from University B.

Sense of belonging. The first time Karla could recall feeling a sense of belonging on campus during her first year was "my very first time I marched pre-game at a football game." In terms of Pi Delta, Karla has always felt a sense of belonging, especially with her line. She reflected that there were

> seven of us and they always emphasized you can't leave a sister behind. We have to know a lot of things and if one person doesn't know it we have to help them out. I remember I was really busy in school and I wasn't keeping up with my stuff, but everybody was so, they cared about me and they all just tried to help me out and it all worked out pretty well.

Lori

Lori is a 20 year old Hispanic female in her fifth semester at University B majoring in Nutrition and Exercise Science. She was the first of her immediate family members to attend college.

Lori chose to attend University B primarily because of her involvement in a scholarship program that she was accepted in as an 8th grader. The program was intended for "low-income first-generation students. And that is what I am—I'm low income, I have a single mom." Lori said that the scholarship program, "helped me with the whole progress of coming to college." It was also only for University B, which was why Lori chose to attend. There were certain requirements that Lori was expected to meet to maintain the scholarship such as keeping up her GPA, "keeping up with grade checks, meeting with advisors, all these other things." Lori's involvement in her scholarship helped her to build her first support community on campus by first connecting the scholarship recipients to one another during high school. The scholarship program

continued to join the students together even during college through bi-weekly seminars and other community events.

Transitioning to University B. Lori's high school was made up of about 1000-2000 students and was an even mix of racially minoritized and White students. So when she transitioned to University B, it was apparent to her that the institution was predominantly White. Being in a predominantly White setting was "very weird" to experience, "going into class it would be very visual and I would observe there's all these White people and I'm only one out of three that aren't White and it's like woah…And they always said this was such a diverse school, but obviously—to me it's not." Being in an environment where she was visually different, "was sometimes uncomfortable." She learned to "just ignore it, like you're here to learn not to observe everybody else."

As a freshman Lori lived in a residence hall. She got along with her roommate, which was one of her good friends from high school, but there were a lot of "partiers" on her floor. She explained that she **"**would interact with a few people, but not anybody else really. Just because it was just, I didn't really feel like I belonged, I didn't feel like I fit in." Her sophomore year she moved to an apartment style residence hall, which she really liked. However she did not like her roommate, which caused her to feel less of a sense of belonging in that space. This year she lived with one of her sorority sisters and now felt that her residence hall was a place she belonged.

Organizational involvement. During high school Lori was involved in several campus organizations, but decided not to join any college organizations until she adjusted academically. She thought about trying out for the show choir because she was involved in similar activities during high school, but it was too "nerve-wracking" and decided not

to. During Lori's freshman year she first joined an academic club focused on her major. During their weekly meetings they "learn[ed] about the process of getting accepted to grad school" and discussed career related topics. The academic club was also a community for Lori and she was friends with the members, but the connection was more "on the academic side" than personal.

Lori always wanted to join a sorority, but the size of the organizations at University B caused her to question whether the members really all got along. In addition, Lori did not expect that all or most of the members would be White—this "was shocking to see." During her sophomore year, Lori learned about Pi Delta at an organization fair event hosted by the University. She also had a few friends that already joined the organization, "they were Latinas and I was like oh I think I'm going to fit in here…it was very welcoming." Lori crossed the spring of her sophomore year.

Sense of belonging. When Lori first started at University B, she did not feel a sense of belonging in class or even other places on campus like the Recreation Center because she felt different being a Latina at a predominantly White institution. She reflected, "going to class…I would just not feel—like I would be looking around and not feel like I fit in here…like everybody would be looking at me." The times that she did feel a sense of belonging within the greater campus community were when she was with her scholarship community. She described it as her "little starter community that I felt I could go and be who I am and be myself. Just feel like I'm ok here."

As for Pi Delta, Lori did not necessarily feel a strong sense of belonging with all of the girls in her line as they were going through the process of joining. She described, "honestly we had some tensions and things we went through because we had different

personalities and we kind of had to lean on each other and put that aside." In those times when she did not feel like she belonged with the others, the end goal of becoming part of the organization was what kept pushing her forward. She thought, "I'm doing this for me not for them." Although Lori did not have a strong sense of belonging during the process, she immediately felt a sense of belonging within Pi Delta once she crossed. Lori described,

> I didn't feel like I belonged at first but the moment we went through the process, we were done with the process and just them just accepting us I guess was my ballpoint of like this is where it's all worth it and these are the people that I went through things with and this is where I belong. I, after it all it was just them respecting me as if I was one of them and just being friendly with me and just being genuine and just being there for me.

Participant01

Participant01 is a 21 year old Latina in her seventh semester at University B, majoring in Human Development and Family Science. Participant01 was the first in her immediate family to attend college.

Participant01 was from the city that University B is located in. She applied to a Fulbright Scholarship as an 8th grader and "went through the process all the way through high school to prepare us to take advanced courses and apply to University B." Therefore she "really didn't think of any outside schools."

Transitioning to University B. Participant01 explained that coming to a predominantly White institution "was really hard…because back in high school it was very diverse." She reflected that "it was kind of awkward walking around and being like,

I don't see a familiar face." Not seeing other familiar faces was particularly the case during her freshman year "because we were new, we had no idea where to go, where to meet people. So it was very overwhelming." She also "really noticed, and kind of still today, I'm usually the only student of Color in my class. So it's kind of like, if they have questions about ethnicity or race, sometimes everybody looks at me." Participant 01 also started as a dental hygiene student, but did not enjoy the classes. As a result, she "didn't feel like I belonged" because it seemed that everyone else liked the courses.

During Participant01's freshman year, she lived on campus with "my good friend from high school" and they decided to "stick together." However she thought the residence hall she lived in was pretty welcoming because there were "a lot of international students there, so they kind of feel the same way, like we're just getting used to everything." She interacted with the other students in friendly conversation, "like how are you doing? How's your semester going?" Her RA hosted events to try to get the residents more involved or to connect with one another. Participant01 and her roommate "tried to go to events, but it wasn't like I truly felt like I belonged. I was just like ok I'll go just to get out of my room, but not like oh this is where I can fit in or something."

Organizational involvement. Participant01's "scholarship program really helped us trying to adjust to college life" by telling them to join student organizations such as MASO, the Mexican-American Student Organization. However she did not like MASO because, "pretty much you just sit around and discuss events and things coming up, but I felt like there was a lot of discussion but not a lot of doing." In addition it was a "very big organization," which also made it "hard to meet new people because…there's so many people you don't know who to talk to."

Participant01 knew a member of Pi Delta from her scholarship program that told her about the organization. She described, “we’re Latina based, we want to help our community, we’re here for academics.” Participant01 thought it sounded interesting and decided to go with two other friends to check out Pi Delta. They attended the Pi Delta socials to learn more about the organization and “get to know the girls and see if that was a fit for us.” They “really liked everything they were telling us” and decided to join.

Sense of belonging. When Participant 01 began at University B, she felt that her sense of belonging “was kind of struggling at first.” She had the “biggest sense of belonging” in her scholarship program. Being with the students in her scholarship program was important because she felt connected with this community since high school.

Participant 01 felt a sense of belonging in Pi Delta “from the very beginning…because we were all Latinas, we were all mostly—it’s Latina based. Like a lot of us spoke Spanish, so it was kind of easy.” Her sense of belonging in Pi Delta throughout college has been pretty constant. The only times Participant01 felt like she did not belong within Pi Delta stemmed from her personality as “an introvert.” However that has not played a large role in her experience because she had a support system through her sisters. She felt that she could call her sisters for anything, whether that was to find someone to do homework with or to help in a time of need.

Omi

Omi is a 20 year old Mexican American female in her fifth semester at University B majoring in Elementary and Special Education. She was not the first of her immediate family members to attend college, her brother also attended University B.

Omi's high school was made up of about 400 students. By the time she graduated, the student population was an even mix of racially Minoritized and White students, including a large population of Latinx students. However, the city was predominantly White when her family first moved there and the population transitioned over time. As more Latinx students moved into the area, Omi experienced racial tensions that spurred from the students. She reflected,

> I don't think they [the White students] were used to seeing that many Hispanics around. Even when I came they would sometimes just stare because they weren't used to families that had several kids or something. So they would kind of just stare…There was a lot of them that would say like insults towards us…So I would usually be the one stepping up and defending them because I didn't find it right for them to be saying things like show me your Green card, stuff like that

When it came time for college, Omi applied to a lot of out of state schools, but in the end decided she did not want to be too far from her family and she realized it was cheaper to stay in state. Her major was also offered at University B and her brother attended school there so she decided on University B.

Transitioning to University B. Omi was "permitted to live off campus" her first year because she came in with enough credits to count as a sophomore. She wanted to live in dorms, but it was too expensive. She decided to live off campus with one of her friends from high school. Even though they did not live in the dorms, that did not stop her from attending residence hall events – she and her roommate still went and thought they were "fun."

Because of Omi's experiences with racism in high school, she had some insecurities coming into a predominantly White college setting. At first, "I don't know why I just had a feeling that people were staring and I don't know if it was just because of my race or what I'm wearing or anything like that. I just always had a feeling." However these went away as time went on and she saw more people from racially diverse backgrounds on campus. It was helpful to have conversations with other students from racially minoritized backgrounds. They could talk about their experiences together and understand where one another were coming from. She reflected, "I think one time I actually started by saying like how did you guys feel like the first day? Did you feel weird? And we didn't even have to say what weird was."

Another space Omi could talk to other students about her experiences was in a program she was in during her freshman year for first-generation students called DREAMS. She could not remember if she signed up for the program or was placed in it, but the program consisted of "a small credit class…we just talked about things like how we felt about campus, how our classes were going, more getting to know about each other." It also did not take her too long to become more comfortable because she joined a Latinx based campus organization and started making friends in it and in other organizations.

Organizational involvement. Omi was involved in campus organizations in high school and knew that she wanted to be part of something in college as well. She first joined the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) on campus. Omi's brother attended University B before she did and was a member of MASO. So even before Omi began school at University B she was asked to do things to help out the organization by

her brother. Pretty much from the start Omi felt that she belonged with the members of the Mexican American Student Organization. In fact she knew some of them already prior to introducing herself because of her brother.

Omi "always wanted to be in a sorority," but "never knew there were actually non-traditional ones." Her brother's girlfriend was in a Latinx sorority, which caused her to gain interest in them. When Omi was considering joining a Latinx sorority, she went to events hosted by Pi Delta as well as another Latinx sorority that was on campus at the time, but has since been suspended. She decided to wait a year to join, but when she did, she inevitably chose Pi Delta over the other organization because they showed they cared for her by maintaining connections with her even throughout her freshman year. Omi decided to join in the spring of her second year on campus and crossed at the end of the semester.

Sense of belonging. Omi generally thought that she belonged to the greater campus community at University B because "we're here for the same reasons, for an education and I think that's all that matters." Although Omi felt a sense of belonging as a student at University B generally, that did not necessarily mean she felt a sense of belonging on campus as a whole. She was very aware of spaces where she felt different and, as a result, her sense of belonging was more compartmentalized to spaces where she was with people she felt comfortable with.

Joining her sorority has played a role in her sense of belonging to the university because before she joined she was more likely to talk to "people that look like me." Now that she joined a Greek organization it has opened her up to other people she would not have spoken to before. There were times during the process of joining that Omi did not

feel a sense of belonging within Pi Delta, yet despite her experience with a particular individual, after Omi crossed, she immediately felt a sense of belonging in the organization.

Luis

Luis is a 21 year old Latinx—"half Cuban, one fourth Honduran and one fourth Guatamalan"— in his seventh semester at University B double majoring in Latin American Studies and Global Studies with minors in History, Ethnic Studies, and Leadership Communication.

Luis didn't know much about getting into college because his parents were "both immigrants with basic levels of education. And I was the first in my family to graduate high school and even think about college." During Luis's junior year he joined a program for students entering the College of Business Administration at University B called Bright Futures. Prior to his involvement, Luis "didn't even know what majors were." He just thought "Business Management sounds good." During the summer before his senior year, the Bright Futures program brought Luis and other students to explore University B and what CBA had to offer. Luis added, "that's what really got me interested, I just loved University B…the atmosphere, the size, everything about it." In addition, he was awarded "a Fulbright Scholarship" and enough scholarships for a "full ride."

Luis also attended the Latinx Leadership Event sponsored by University B twice, once in his junior year of high school and another as a senior. The Latinx Leadership Event offered discussions and workshops focused on Latinx students. During his senior year he sat in one of the workshops focused on immigration and its connection to the Latinx population. That was when he first learned about Latin American Studies programs. After

visiting the Latin American Studies Department Luis decided to pursue a double major in business and Latin American Studies.

Luis's involvement in the Latin American Studies Department also played a role in terms of his acceptance of his identity as a Latinx. Before coming to college, Luis felt somewhat "ashamed" of his identity as a Latinx. His first semester, he took a course "targeted for heritage speakers of Spanish," which "was the first time I was in a room full of Latinos. And then just how it wasn't just me going through the same struggles or personal struggles, it was pretty much the majority of the class." His professor "was very empowering in a sense of not to be ashamed of who you are as a Latino." Luis's professor caused Luis to begin "transitioning that mentality from I'm kind of ashamed of being a Latino to oh I'm a Latino. Yeah!" After three years, Luis decided to drop his Business major.

Transitioning to University B. Luis attended a large high school made up of over 2000 students. The racial composition "was half White, half Hispanic and then a portion that were African immigrants." When he came to University B, he noticed the "changes in demographics," particularly within the classes from his two majors. In CBA, the courses were predominantly White and "it was rare to see a Hispanic." In his "higher advanced Spanish courses or my Latin American studies courses…I would see more Hispanics in those classes." Even walking around campus it was "maybe a little subtle," but he could see that "the majority were White students and it was difficult to find Hispanic students outside of my classroom."

Luis lived on campus his freshman year and while it was convenient, there were some negative aspects of the experience. First, there were maybe 70 "White guys" in the

hall and he was “one of three Hispanics.” The residence hall was a space that had “obvious signs that I was in a predominantly White institution…I was starting to notice like woah woah where are the Hispanics at?” Although his residence hall had “multiple events each year” to get residents involved, as an introvert Luis was “not really interested” in being with “all the party animals on my floor.” His sophomore year living on campus was different since the hall included “both genders” and the female side included more Latinas—a lot of which were friends with Luis.

Organizational involvement. Luis did not plan to join organizations when he came to University B, but his scholarship program emphasized the “importance of involvement.” He tried multiple organizations including a pre-law club, an Evangelical group, and Spanish Club. However pre-law club was “boring” with “no sense of community.” The Evangelical group was too different from Latinx Evangelicals. And the Spanish club mainly consisted of White students, which lacked the cultural connections he was looking for.

Throughout his freshman year he had friends from his hometown that were “persistent” on him joining the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO). Although he initially resisted because he did not “identify as Mexican or Mexican American,” he eventually went to a few meetings during his sophomore year. The vice president of MASO was in one of his classes and “knew that I was organized, responsible” so she offered him a committee chair position. He was not really sure what he was supposed to do, but took the position and his involvement just grew from there until he became president of the organization his junior year.

Luis's involvement in Zeta Alpha all started with a group of friends he had that were in a Latinx sorority on campus. He became good friends with their sisters as well and supported their events. During his sophomore year he was approached by members of Zeta Alpha and asked if he was interested in the fraternity a couple of times, but politely declined. Finally during his junior year one of his friends in the Latinx sorority told Luis that Zeta Alpha was "struggling a little bit and are unsure of their future and are trying to clean up their reputation" and they needed a leader like him. Zeta Alpha's need for a leader "intrigued" Luis. Luis thought about it and even though he felt like he was "at my peak" with having good friends and organizational involvement, he thought "it would be nice to have more male friends…to really have those brothers to depend on." So he began the process his first semester of his junior year and was initiated at the end of that semester.

Sense of belonging. When Luis first started at University B, his sense of belonging was primarily limited to his Spanish class for heritage speakers. The Spanish course was not only important in terms of Luis's sense of belonging, but also in embracing his identity as a Latinx. Luis first began developing a sense of belonging Zeta Alpha "going through the whole educational process." While he currently felt a sense of belonging in the fraternity, there have been times when Luis did not feel like he belonged in Zeta Alpha. Luis explained that he was different from his brothers in terms of his identity as a heterosexual male with "a feminine gender expression." Luis explained that in terms of his expression, "how I act, how I interact with others, or the things I do are just not stereotypical hypermasculine or alpha male. It's just a little away from that maybe more on the feminine side." Luis noted that there were some members that did not fit into the "hypermasculine" description, but the "majority" of his brothers did and "may be why I

don't fit in as well." However his sense of belonging was reconfirmed after attending the fraternity's national convention over the summer and he was reminded of why he joined the organization and that it did not matter how he identified because "at the end of the day you're still brothers. At the end of the day everyone values you because you're in it."

Latinx Greek Letter Organizations

This section begins by discussing why participants made the decision to join a Greek organization including what it means to be a member for life, the significance of developing national networks, and the role of sisterhood and brotherhood in the organizations. Next is an explanation of how LGLOs differ from traditional Greek organizations followed by an explanation of what LGLOs do. The sections include a detailed account of general chapter events such as organizational meetings as well as service events geared toward general communities and Latinxs specifically. In addition the sections describes the cultural events LGLOs host, including those intended to celebrate and share elements of Latinx culture on campus as well as social justice events to raise awareness concerning societal issues the Latinx community faces. The description concludes with an explanation of the process individuals undergo to join the LGLOs.

Why Go Greek?

There were several defining characteristics of Greek organizations that were appealing to the participants when they considered joining and were an important part of their current and future experience in their respective organization. Among the most prominent of these characteristics were being a member of the fraternity or sorority for

life, developing national networks of fraternity or sorority members, and experiencing sisterhood or brotherhood.

Membership for life. First, membership in a Greek organization involves being a member for life. Membership for life was significant to the participants in different ways, but it all boiled down to—as Lori stated—"we always say once a Pi Delta always a Pi Delta and that to me is what it says. Once you're part of this sisterhood, you're in it for life." Hector reinforced the notion of membership for life stating,

> you're part of that organization for life. For like eternity. And always a brother, whatever you may be or do whether it's good or bad you're still a brother no matter what happens. Even after death, you'll still be remembered as a brother.

Omi described membership for life in terms of support—"even after you graduate you're still going to be a Pi Delta. You see a sister out there that is a Pi Delta…that person will always be there for you no matter what." Delta thought of membership for life in terms of ways membership could be carried forward beyond college. He described, "it means that we still continue to live out our principles, it means giving back to our chapters, being a resource or physically supporting events. Creating mentorships…brothers still find a way to be involved." Nine already had tangible ways she planned to carry her involvement forward after she graduates next semester—

> I'm still going to be active, I'm still going to come to all the processes if I'm not too far away. I'm still going to be calling in to chapter meetings and asking how everyone's doing and things like that.

National networks. Being able to connect with members of different chapters within a state or across the country was another defining characteristic of Greek

organizations. For instance, Omi explained that she was close with some of the members from another chapter in the state. Hector knew "wherever I go within the United States I still have brothers around to contact." Networks not only included members from different chapters across the nation, but also alumni from their own chapter. Juan explained that "there's people that come back and they're like in their late 40's or early 50's who will still crash on our couch, who we'll still take them out to eat – or vice versa." These relationships are valuable in and of themselves, but they often helped members in other ways, such as getting connected to job or internship opportunities. Juan asserted,

> [alumni] send out emails constantly asking for resume reviews or they put out hey there's an opening in my company, anybody who wants to participate, anyone who wants to try and apply for it let me know and I can make those connections for you.

Participant01 explained that there is a sense of accountability when it comes to chapter alumni, which can also "be stressful." She noted that these individuals have a vested interest in the chapter's success so they often asked how things were going with the mindset of "we didn't just start an organization for it to end." Participant01 further reflected that there are times when "we do struggle and sometimes we're afraid to tell our alum we're struggling because they'll be like 'why? What's going on?'" Even still Participant01 thought that at the end of the day, "it's really nice just knowing that you'll always have those people to go back to…Just because simply you're a Pi Delta and they're a Pi Delta."

Sisterhood and brotherhood. Perhaps one of the most foundational concepts in relation to the participants' experience in their organizations was the role of sisterhood and brotherhood. Christina asserted that this was the most important thing that distinguished Latinx Greek organizations from other non-Greek organizations and that "you couldn't really find that in a let's say a Mexican American Student Organization or something like that rather than actually being in Greek Life where you can build that bond." Initially, Davina had a difficult time articulating what the term sisterhood meant to her. She said it was "something really special that sometimes you can't explain. There's a quote that's like from the outside looking in you might not understand and then from the inside looking out it's so hard to explain." However she made sense of it as "being there for each other no matter what and loving each other unconditionally." Davina added that sisterhood entailed a family-like bond,

> even though we aren't related we still love each other as if we did. And you know at the end of the day we all get mad at each other too. But…we're sisters and that's what brings us back together.

Many of the participants echoed this emphasis on family. For instance Juan said that brotherhood was "the literal sense of they're essentially part of my family. I would do just about anything for my parents and for my sister and the same goes for my brothers." Fernando's interpretation similarly centralized the familial aspect, but also distinguished brotherhood from friendship because "friendships can always end, but brotherhood – even though you might not be on the best of terms all the time you still have that support…it's more like family. You can't end a family."

What LGLOs Do

All of the participants referred to the particular set of values or principles that their respective organization followed, which informed what the LGLOs did. Romeo asserted that these principles were "really what sets us apart from any other organization on campus." The organizations brought their values to fruition through their planned events and initiatives. These events included chapter meetings as well as fundraising, sisterhood/brotherhood, social, philanthropic, and cultural events. Each organization's national board had particular requirements that they had to meet regarding to the type and quantity of events they needed to host. All organizations essentially engaged in similar types of events, but in different ways. Importantly, Latinx culture undergirds much of what they do and plays a role in many regards including the type of service events they engage in and even the types of foods they sell in fundraising events.

General events. Members of LGLOs engaged in general events such as weekly chapter meetings in which they discussed and planned fraternity/sorority business with members of the organization. In addition, organizations often emphasized the importance of scholarship with joint study sessions with their sisters or brothers. Organizations also engaged in fundraising events for their chapters. The organizations hosted sisterhood and brotherhood events as a way to bring the members closer together. These events were exclusive to the membership and were a way for the members to just spend time together and have fun. For instance, Lori noted that her chapter "just had a movie night sisterhood event last weekend. So that was nice, just getting together and watching movies." Luis said that his chapter did things like have "a cookout" or watch a University B football game together. These were distinct from social events that they invited other individuals

outside of their chapter to attend. For example, Davina said that her chapter hosts a "Galentine's" event near Valentine's Day that is focused on "self-care and also having fun with other women on campus."

Service. Philanthropy events were also a crucial component of what LGLOs did. Several of the participants described ways their chapter was able to integrate Latinx culture into their service events. For instance, Pi Delta hosts a Latina leadership type event where middle school girls from "around the community and nearby towns" are invited to campus to speak with the members of Pi Delta about their educational experiences. Omi explained that helping these girls to "get further" in their education "is actually a big part of who we are as a whole, just pushing other Latina girls to keep going, that they will make it far." Nu Sigma started a Latinx Family Day on campus which is an event hosted in Spanish that brings in high school students and parents to University A. Fernando explained that during the event, the brothers told attendees about "the process of becoming a student here, the resources available, what type of scholarships they can apply for. Just kind of showing them around campus as well as in the living areas." Fernando noted that the event was catered to "the parents and the students just so that we can get the parents to understand and can give that support to their children." The Latinx Family Day event became so successful and in-demand that a department on campus stepped in to expand the program (though Fernando wished they gave more credit to the fraternity for starting it).

The organizations have also engaged in other service opportunities away from Latinx specific populations. For instance, Omega Iota volunteered with the American Heart Association as well as in a garden their chapter established at a local high school.

Omi was excited that she already signed up her Pi Delta chapter to build a house with Habitat for Humanity this year. Zeta Alpha has also helped with half marathons in the community as well as an event to raise money for a local shelter. These are only a few examples of many service initiatives the organizations engaged in.

Cultural events. Cultural events formed an important backbone of what the LGLOs did. There were two essential types of cultural events that the organizations hosted. The first were more focused on raising cultural awareness and celebrating cultural traditions on campus. For example, Pi Delta was planning an upcoming collaboration on a Dia de los Muertos event and recently collaborated with the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) on a Mexican Independence Day celebration. Karla noted that during the event they provided "traditional Mexican food and…traditional music from Mexico and they had a lot of dances from a dancing group that does traditional folklore songs." Luis explained that Zeta hosted a "las Posadas" event, which is "more of a Mexican holiday or like a celebration that's done in December."

The second type of cultural events were social justice based events. For instance, Kappa Beta has sponsored several educational events including one on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), another on LGBT identity within the Latinx community, and one focused on the AfroLatinx community. Nine explained that they also hosted "an educational about sexual domestic violence… and then we tied in machismo to that." They also had

> a conversation event where we just sat around and talked and had conchas and Abuelita, Chocolate Abuelita [a traditional Mexican-style hot chocolate drink].

> And we talked about the protests that were happening in [another university] and we had a conversation about that.

Similarly Omega Iota has brought notable speakers to campus with messages focused on societal issues relevant to the Latinx community such as immigration reform and identity including Jose Antonio Vargas, Bobby Gonzalez and Denise Soler Cox.

Contrasting Traditional Greek Organizations and LGLOs

All of the participants thought that membership in an LGLO was very different from being in a traditional Greek organization. The participants identified a number of ways the organizations were dissimilar, however there were a few primary characteristics identified. First, LGLOs were much smaller in size than traditional organizations. Size had important implications in terms of membership because as Fernando explained, "our organization is typically smaller and we rely on the quality on our membership, not just the quantity." LGLOs did not own fraternity or sorority houses, and the cost of traditional Greek membership was much greater than for LGLOs. Hector explained, "our dues are…cheaper to pay off. Traditional fraternities, their dues are a bit higher because of spending money on their houses as part of that due." He added that this was helpful for "students who don't have a lot of wealth." In Karla's perspective, compared to her sorority where the fees were "less than $200," traditional organizations were "mainly for rich, White people…Just because you have to pay thousands and thousands of dollars."

The participants all described traditional organizations as being predominantly White and often less inclusive than their organizations. For instance Lori was initially surprised to see how little diversity the traditional organizations had, "but then I understood because it is pretty much a White school. So it was like obvious and

understandable that they were all just White people." Participant01 did not see much racial or ethnic diversity in the traditional Greek organizations either. She noted that "usually they're all predominantly White. But then again I've never really interacted with them. So when you are a minority, more than likely you'll be told to look at multicultural fraternities and sororities." In contrast, she asserted that Pi Delta "pride ourselves in saying yeah we're Latina based, but we accept anybody from different racial backgrounds. I know two of our sisters are Iraqi…we are open to everyone."

Because LGLOs are Latinx based, they fundamentally promote ties to Latinx culture—which is not the case for traditional organizations. LGLOs promoted the Latinx culture by connecting members to other students that shared cultural backgrounds and through organizational commitment to initiatives that benefit the Latinx community. As an extension, Juan also believed that members of LGLOs had an overall "greater racial awareness and advocate for issues" than traditional Greek Letter? organizations. He explained that members of the two types of organizations have "different views about everything. You know it comes with your ethnicity, it comes with your background."

As part of a representation of their culture and distinction as Multicultural Greek Organizations, the organizations also engaged in strolling and/or saluting. Although traditional Greek organizations sometimes strolled, it was rare for these organizations and not an integral part of their culture. Strolling is a tradition that was adopted from historically Black Greek organizations—those within the National Pan-Hellenic Council. Paloma described strolling as "party walking…you're kind of doing dance moves or you're moving and you're also throwing your sign up and stuff like that to show that you're proud of your organization so it also shows pride." (Throwing your sign up meant

that the members did a gesture with their hands as a symbol of their organization.) Paloma loved saluting and described it as "poetry in motion." She detailed that it goes back to the military in terms of, "how soldiers salute…it teaches you discipline and you're reciting history and showing why you're so proud of your organization while doing movements to it." Each fraternity or sorority either saluted, strolled, or did both. The frequency that they engaged in these activities differed by group, however some particular occasions where they saluted or strolled included new member showcases, NPHC new line reveals (called a probate), or even during stroll-off competitions where NPHC and MGC organizations (and sometimes traditionals) competed against one another performing their strolls. These events were open to the campus community.

Joining LGLOs

The process of joining the LGLOs was also distinct from how students joined traditional Greek organizations. Unlike traditional Greek organizations, Latinx Greek letter organizations do not have an official recruitment period to recruit new members. Instead, these organizations typically host "informationals," which Lori described as an opportunity to "learn about who we are and what we stand for." These informationals are presentations that describe the purpose of the organization and what membership entails. Organizations also host social events, which offer a more "personal" way to get to know members. For instance, Lori noted "we just got done with a pumpkin painting event last week. So girls come, paint your pumpkins, just to get them to socialize with us." Students interested in joining are then required to submit an application indicating their interest in the organization.

Following the application, these "interests" must then go through a secret process to become a member that is only known within the organization. Though the participants could not discuss this private process in detail, as Fernando described, for all chapters of Nu Sigma there are "certain criteria" they have to meet in the process and "common knowledge that they share with everybody" through the process. Many of the participants reflected on ways the process brings them closer to their sisters or brothers, and particularly with those that are part of their line (the group of interests that go through the process and join the organization together). In Lori's experience with her line sisters,

> you learn to learn from each other and lean on each other through it all. At the end when you do become a member it's more meaningful, like oh you were there for me, oh we went through this together…we just get to know each other on a more intimate level. So it was more meaningful to call each other sisters at the end.

Even being an interest in the process is a secret and incoming members do not tell anyone outside of the organization that they are joining. Therefore, at the culmination of the new member process, chapters will host a member reveal event in which interests "cross" and become active members of the chapter. Participant01 explained that the events are open to anyone to attend and they draw "a huge crowd because everybody that's Greek comes out to support you." By that, she meant all of the MGC and NPHC organizations—not necessarily the traditionals. Participant01 further described that during the event, the new members are "all in masks and covered." Once they come out the new members "recite other Greeks' information" including "their name, the school they come from and the year they were founded." She asserted that reciting the information could be nerve-wracking because "it's a lot of information because you have

all Multicultural Greek Council and then you have NPHC." After they recite the information, they remove the masks and reveal who they are. Then all of the members and attendees stroll and celebrate that the new members have crossed.

Chapter 5: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of involvement in a particular university subculture, Latinx Greek letter organizations, in how Latinx college students develop and make meaning of their sense of belonging within PWIs. The following questions guided this research:

1. How do Latinx college students involved in LGLOs at PWIs experience and develop a sense of belonging?
2. What role (if any) does involvement in Latinx fraternities and sororities play in how Latinx college students experience and develop a sense of belonging at PWIs?

Overview of Findings

To understand the research questions for this study, it was important to first examine what it was about particular places that influenced student sense of belonging. As part of our interviews, I asked participants to identify places they felt a sense of belonging and places they did not. Accordingly, much of this discussion was grounded in the microsystem component of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, "the immediate, face-to-face setting in which the person exists" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 302). An analysis of spaces in which participants reported feeling a sense of belonging and those in which they lacked a sense of belonging resulted in five primary characteristics of places of belonging: *where I have a role or responsibility*, *where people look like me*, *where I am valued and cared for*, *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued*, and *where I share interests or values with others*. These characteristics shaped the extent to which participants felt a sense of belonging within a given microsystem, which also

played a role in other components of Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1997, 2005) bioecological theory including the mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem levels.

Before discussing ways that these systemic levels interacted to influence the participants' overall sense of belonging within their university, this section will first describe ways the five characteristics of belonging manifested in microsystems. An exploration of sense of belonging in microsystems on and off campus is followed by a detailed look at how the characteristics came to light through involvement in the LGLOs. Notably, although Bronfenbrenner referred to "school" generally as a microsystem (see Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 312), the results of this study underscored the importance of distinguishing parts of the university as individual microsystems as opposed to a whole. Microsystems such as fraternity and sorority chapter meetings, classes, student support offices, and the participants' work spaces were encountered daily and, as a result, played an important role in individual sense of belonging.

Importantly, the findings of this study point to the critical role of the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) in terms of "the historical period in which the person lives" (p. 641). The most prominent way the chronosystem came into play was through participant experiences being shaped by the 2016 presidential election and overall societal climate. Therefore the following sections will primarily focus on a description of ways the characteristics of belonging manifested in microsystems, but will also point to indications of the influence of the chronosystem as they emerge. The chapter will then examine the interconnections in micro and macro levels of belonging including an analysis of institutional level sense of belonging as well as the role of subcultures in Latinx sense of belonging.

Characteristics of Belonging: Campus and External Microsystems

The analysis of microsystems as follows begins by addressing ways the characteristics of belonging played a role in student experiences while highlighting associations with Strange and Banning's (2015) components of campus environments. The findings of this study, in light of Strange and Banning's (2015) components of campus environments and Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1997, 2005) bioecological theory, informed the development of figures to illustrate influences at play in Latinx college student sense of belonging. As illustrated in Figure 5.1, microsystems were made up of individual interactions with elements of a particular setting, which included the physical, organizational, socially constructed, and human aggregate environments (Strange & Banning, 2015). Student experiences with these environmental elements defined the extent to which the characteristics of belonging were embodied within the microsystem and, as a result, affected their sense of belonging within the microsystem.

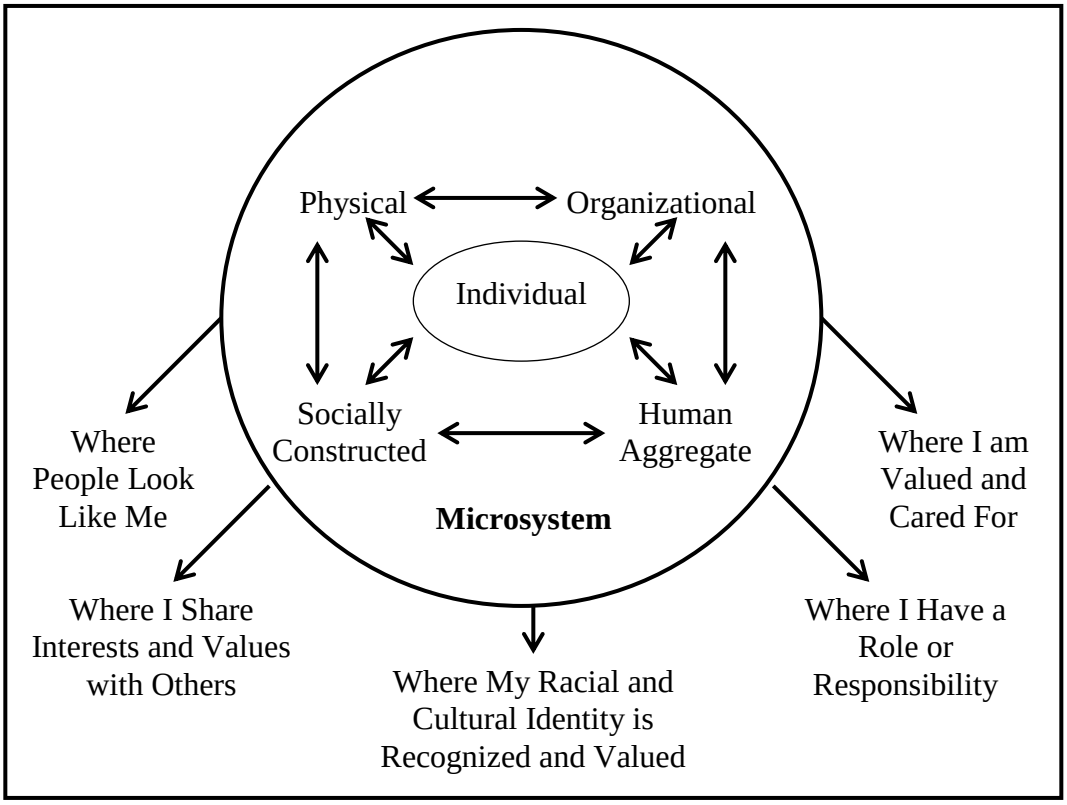

Figure 5.1. Microsystems in Latinx Student Sense of Belonging

This section identifies examples of how each of the characteristics of belonging came to light within campus microsystems as well as microsystems outside of the institutional environment followed by an analysis of how these characteristics played a role in terms of microsystems participants encountered as a result of their involvement in LGLOs, including ways the characteristics of belonging extended into their experiences in the greater Greek community. These examples are not intended to assert that the characteristics of belonging manifested singularly; rather, in most scenarios participant sense of belonging was a result of an overlap of several characteristics. However these sections simply aim to highlight important ways the characteristics of belonging played a role in shaping participant sense of belonging.

Where People Look Like Me: Campus and External Microsystems

> *I don't think I would feel comfortable [in the green space near the Union] just because any time I walk around there anyone that's playing anything or doing anything, it's always White people. I feel like if I would go with my friends to lay down or anything we would be outcasted. We would be looked down at in a way. Because I've never really seen minorities go there as much*. (Omi)

Omi did not feel a sense of belonging in the large open green space on campus near the Union where people often played Frisbee or just laid down. When she passed the green space, unless she was talking to someone she knew, she "always look[ed] down walking really fast because in a way I do feel uncomfortable walking through that big area." While Omi thought the green space was unwelcoming to racially minoritized students, she thought a nearby patio area seemed "more welcoming for everyone because there I have seen more minorities sitting down doing homework or just even talking." Clearly for Omi, spaces where she did not see racially minoritized students did not seem as welcoming as those that she did.

Like Omi, seeing other students, faculty, and staff that looked like the participants in terms of being a racially minoritized individual or a Latinx specifically was essential to their sense of belonging. As Fernando described, when he saw that he was the only or one of few Latinxs in a given setting, "I just feel excluded. I mean they don't really do anything that should make me feel that way, but then again they don't try to make any interactions with me either." In their description of the human aggregate environment, Strange and Banning (2015) asserted that "environments are transmitted through people, and the dominant features of any given environment are partially a function of the

collective characteristics of the individuals who inhabit it" (p. 51). As part of the human characteristics within a particular environment, *where people look like me* was a reflection of Strange and Banning's (2015) human aggregate environment. The following sections will describe examples of how being *where people look like me* positively influenced participant sense of belonging, how being in predominantly White settings negatively affected participant sense of belonging, and ways that feelings of marginalization and belonging were mitigated and amplified by the people within particular settings.

Being where people look like me. Being in places *where people look like me* was a visible way participants were able to identify with others and knew that they shared similar backgrounds and experiences. For example, when Romeo saw other Latinxs, it was comforting because he knew

> when I spoke Spanish they would understand and speak it back, we'd listen to the same music, we'd do the same activities, we were eating some of the same foods…So it was really…the cultural connections that we had and the similarities in our ethnicities.

For Romeo, these cultural connections were not limited to other students from Mexican backgrounds like himself. Romeo noted "I have a friend that's from Peru, El Salvador, Costa Rica, all of the Central American and South American countries." Romeo and his friends even often compared and contrasted elements of their Latinx culture. For instance, Romeo said "I have a name for a food and [my friend would] say oh we make it like this and it's called this."

Connecting with individuals that looked like them was important to participant sense of belonging. One way participants were able to establish these connections was through particular communities or ethnic based groups. For example, before coming to college, Romeo attended church regularly with his family. When he transitioned to University A, he was looking for a church to attend and was invited to go with one of his friends to a church's Spanish mass. Romeo chose to attend the Spanish mass because, "It's how I was raised. So every time we went to church it would be in Spanish so that's how I'm accustomed to so I feel like it's necessary for me to keep that tradition going." In addition to being a tradition, there was also an element of comfort that Romeo experienced "Just being bi-lingual and using that ability just makes me more comforting and have that security feeling that I'm in a place where people understand me and I understand them. We have similar backgrounds and attributes." He was a "little nervous" to go at first because he "didn't know anyone." Romeo recalled, "it was my first time going and the father came up to me and introduced himself to me and remembered my name." Romeo's friend only went the first time and stopped going after that, but Romeo continued to go and even now tries "to go as much as I can on Sundays when I'm not home." Attendance for the Spanish mass was somewhat small, "anywhere from 30-60. So it's a handful of people." He has only gotten to know about four to five people in the church—"the Spanish Director, the two fathers, and my fraternity advisor is actually in the choir for the church." Romeo explained that to him, sense of belonging really was more about the people,

> Any place in general I feel like there's a correlation between the people you know and how you feel at that location. To me it's not really the location, it's who is

> there that really makes it the atmosphere I want to be in. The church by itself is just a church.

Even though Romeo did not know many of the members, he felt that overall the people were always welcoming and smiling.

Just as Romeo experienced a sense of belonging outside of campus within his church, Hector's membership in several communities within University A where others looked like him was integral to his college experience and sense of belonging. For one, he formed a strong connection to the members of the Latinx Science and Engineering Organization (LSEO). The group easily connected with one another because it primarily consisted of engineering and science majors. However most of the members in the organization were also Latinx, which also played a role in Hector's belonging. Hector's classes were majorly made up of White students, so having a space to connect with other Latinxs was "great" for Hector because it helped him to know "there's other people like me." In classes, Hector did not comfortable

> because it's not a majority [of] Hispanics[2] or Latinos, just majority Whites and so I feel like…some White people don't understand what I'm going through and diverse students are going through, but when I come to this club they understand and they always try to help each other out as best as we can.

While Romeo's involvement in his church and Hector's participation in campus organizations resulted in somewhat enduring memberships, for Christina, even the opportunity to be connected with others that looked like her through a weekend retreat

[2] The term Latinx is used throughout the findings unless participants specifically used a different term such as the gendered Latina/o or Hispanic.

was significant to her sense of belonging. Christina did not feel a sense of belonging on the campus as a whole "for a really long time" when she first began at University A, but this changed when she attended the Latinx Leadership Event during her first semester. The event connected her to other Latinx students on campus that she could relate to and begin forming a community with. The event was the first place she recalled feeling a sense of belonging. In fact she "met most of my friends there" and "most of my line sisters were there." She reflected,

> I think after being on campus where it was hard finding my place to fit in, being brought together with a group of students that you identify with or that you can relate to a whole lot just felt really nice and just being able to talk about your experiences and not having to hold anything back. Whether that's speaking Spanish because when you do it on campus people look at you weird, or inside jokes that you have, or just having a good time.

Being among other students that shared cultural backgrounds with the participants or experiences as racially minoritized individuals provided a common ground they could more easily build connections from than with White students.

There were also particular places on campus that participants expressed feeling a sense of belonging where they were among other racially minoritized or Latinx individuals. For instance, several of the participants at University A were part of the TRIO Student Support Services Program (SSSP), a federally funded program to support "college retention and graduation rates of its participants" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, para. 2), and identified its office as a place of belonging. Romeo for one described the TRIO SSSP Office as his "go-to spot" when he was "between classes or

just on campus and I don't know where to go." Being in a space with others that he saw as similar to himself was an important part of his belonging. Although TRIO SSSP was not exclusively for racially minoritized students, membership was predominantly made up of students from racially minoritized backgrounds. As Romeo explained, there were "about 150 students" in the program. He reflected, "I feel like we share the same experiences. Just being that first-generation, minority status. It brings people together and once you meet someone you know you tend to stick with them. So that I feel like can bring us together."

Nine was also a member of TRIO SSSP and described it as "a place where we can go and just be ourselves." Nine expressed that the TRIO Office "always felt like at home like a place where I could see all my friends." She explained that because the TRIO Office and the Multicultural Center were in the same building at University A, she would often "bounce back and forth" visiting each. Nine believed these places were "welcoming because again you get to see people who look like you and are multicultural people."

As reflected in Nine's experience, another space many participants from University A and University B identified as a place of belonging was the University Multicultural Center. Since the Multicultural Centers at University A and B were open to all students, they were frequently mentioned by the participants. Omi for instance felt very comfortable in the University B Multicultural Center and thought it was a place "where a lot of different ethnicities hang out and where we get to bond in a way more." She explained that when they were not doing homework or watching TV in the lounge, they were "having discussions about what's going on around us. Most of the time it's about sports or any big debates going on especially now with the Black Lives Matter and

things like that." Omi added, "I think that's my favorite place to go anywhere really because I know that I will find someone that looks like me or is a minority."

Similarly Luis felt "a lot of sense of belonging" in the Multicultural Center at University B—a place he uses so often "I consider it my second home." He described, "I think I go there every single day of the week and when school is open and everything." He goes there to study and socialize with others. What really drives his sense of belonging in the Multicultural Center is "seeing people who are similar to me that they're Hispanics, they're Latinos. And then the majority would be people I know and then friends or close friends." Fernando thought the Multicultural Center at University A was "the most comfortable scene for me." To Fernando, sense of belonging was about the people within a given space, and the Multicultural Center was "for the most part where many Latinos go." Seeing other Latinxs was primarily why he felt a sense of belonging in the Center as well as the TRIO Office.

Another setting that came into play in student sense of belonging in terms of *where people look like me* were academic spaces. Although clasess were most often predominantly comprised of White students and were places where students frequently lacked a sense of belonging, there were some notable exceptions. As described in Luis's story, he took a Spanish course that was intended for heritage Spanish speakers. The professor was Mexican and the majority of the students in the class were also Latinxs. Luis reflected that "it was the first time I was in a room full of Latinos." Being among other students and faculty that shared racial or cultural identities as Luis helped him to see "it wasn't just me going through the same struggles." Not only did the class offer him a place where he belonged, but topics discussed in class such as immigration, identity,

and poverty were also critical in helping Luis embrace his Latinx identity. Luis thought his professor

> was very empowering in a sense of not to be ashamed of who you are as a Latino. And just having statistics on where we fit in with the U.S. population and within the Hispanic population…that's where I started transitioning that mentality from I'm kind of ashamed of being a Latino to oh I'm a Latino. Yeah!

Similarly, during Nine's first semester she "took a Latino studies class and that's where I met some more Latinos." Being in the class was clearly special to Nine because it was one of the few places she felt a sense of belonging when she first began at University A. Nine reflected,

> just being able to say hi or talk to them [students in the course] and actually have a nice conversation. I really felt like I belonged in that class especially with the class content we were learning. It was really interesting to me and I liked it.

Participant01 also felt a sense of belonging in a building where she was taking an African American Studies course because "I feel like I can speak my view and just how I'm viewing things and how I'm understanding things and just talking about societal issues right now." An important part of Participant01's belonging in this space stemmed from the class being

> so diverse I think that really helps because we all have different viewpoints, whereas if I were in a class it may be in some other building or somewhere else or not even that class it would have been like I wouldn't have been so willing to share my thoughts.

Participant 01 thought that in settings that lacked the diversity she saw in this particular course, she would be "restraining myself from actually expressing everything." Notably enrollment size also played a role in her comfort in this particular class. Her classes are a bit smaller now—"maybe 20-25 students" as opposed to large lecture style rooms where, "if I raise my hand and speak up, everyone turns and looks at you and that's just awkward."

In addition to the positive influence seeing other racially minoritized students in classroom settings had on participant sense of belonging, another way participants saw their identities reflected in others was by seeing racially minoritized faculty and staff members within and beyond the classroom setting. Lori for instance asserted "all the faculty I have experience with have been really helpful to me personally." She added that the faculty and staff members that were particularly helpful to Lori, "actually cared about my personal life…Just you know helping you out that way and just being really there for you apart from your academics." Lori has seen some diversity with the faculty and staff she has been in contact with, including her racial ethics teacher and members of her scholarship staff. Yet even though there have only been a few, these individuals made a difference in Lori's experience. She reflected,

> I feel like having more of those ethnic people on campus also gives you that belonging like I said. So it has really impacted me in that way to go to them first. And just their personalities are more willing to help, more "yeah come talk to me, you can always come talk to me." I haven't really felt that way with the White faculty so I just really go to them instead.

Fernando thought when it came to Latinx faculty and staff, "I just feel that you can never have enough." Fernando could only think of "maybe four who constantly help and support the Latinos and organizations on campus. So I mean, that alone should probably be able to tell you that there probably should be more." In his experience,

> the Latino organizations for the most part share the same staff members. Being an educated Latino on campus, doctor or staff/faculty, I feel like they have a lot on their plate for the fact that so many organizations rely on them…In my eyes, they put in a lot of work for not only themselves and what they do, but for the Latino community that's on campus.

He thought there were other faculty and staff from different racial backgrounds that "support Latinos on campus," but "I wouldn't say they advocate for them as much. They wouldn't go out of their way to try to make something happen." Clearly for Fernando it was important to have Latinx faculty and staff on campus because of the unique support they could offer Latinx students on campus.

Being in predominantly White settings. In contrast to the positive effects that being *where people look like me* had on participant sense of belonging, there were also instances when being in spaces where the people were predominantly White negatively swayed participant sense of belonging. Luis, for one, struggled to belong in some academic spaces at University B. He originally started his college experience as a business major, but had "very little" sense of belonging in the College of Business Administration "because it's very predominantly White." Luis added

> the only way I was able to have that sense of belonging in CBA, which was very little, was that I would get together with my friends that I made whether through

> the [Latina sorority] or through other friends in MASO…and compare schedules together and take classes together and sit together.

Luis and his friends thought of this strategy in his second semester, so during his first semester he had to "rough it." Luis also recognized that his CBA faculty were predominantly White. Luis noted that he saw some diversity, but more so in terms of international faculty members rather than "domestic minority professors," so he still did not see his own culture and background reflected in the setting. Luis actually met a Hispanic CBA faculty member for the first time after he left CBA, but he thought "it would have been nice" to know there was a Hispanic faculty member while he was in the program.

Luis was currently taking courses at the Campus Extension, a second campus site away from central University B. Campus Extension was also a place he lacked a sense of belonging. While his CBA classes had a "tad bit of minority students," Campus Extension was "more like completely White." This semester was his "first time taking classes over there" and even though he enjoyed the classes, "there's just no sense of belonging there." He explained that it has "been tough when it comes to trying to fit into my classes" because his leadership courses "are heavily White female dominated." To Luis, it was not the fact that the space was unfamiliar, it was because of the people within it and the lack of diversity. Being there made him feel "lonely." He has tried making friends in his classes at Campus Extension, but in addition to being "White female dominated" the students were also primarily from traditional Greek sororities, "so that even adds a little less sense of belonging."

While most participants' recognition of being one of few racially minoritized students in their classes influenced their sense of belonging early on in their college experience, Juan's sense of being different played a role in his experience later in his college career. Although Juan recognized that University A was a predominantly White institution from the beginning of his time there, his recognition of being different in classes was amplified when he began 400 level courses during the first semester of his junior year. Juan explained that this realization came later in his program because "you don't really notice it when you're in an auditorium full of 400 Chem students," whereas his courses now consisted of 30-40 students. He also used to sit with "other students that I knew from STEM Forward…So I didn't really notice it too much." As he progressed to higher level courses he no longer had STEM Forward students in those classes. Losing the support network in his classes coupled with a smaller class setting and caused his recognition of being one of few racially minoritized students to become more salient for Juan. While his previous courses always had "two or three other people of Color," there are "not even two to three now." While there were "more Asians" in his classes, this did not seem to increase his belonging in these spaces. Juan explained that the presence of other racially minoritized students is "one of the first things I notice when the semester starts and it kind of determines where I sit as well. Trying to sit next to those other students."

As reflected in Omi's previously described lack of belonging in the green space near the University B Union, in addition to classroom settings, there were also non-academic spaces in which participants felt different and that they did not belong. One example of a non-academic place on campus Romeo lacked a sense of belonging in was a

particular “nicer, newer” residence hall. Unlike the hall he lived in when he was a freshman, which was racially diverse, this one was predominantly White. He had “a theory” that

> more of the socioeconomically higher class students would live on that side of campus and then the other students would live where I lived so on the engineering side of campus.

He further explained, “there you can see more of the White, higher class.” Romeo had only “been there maybe two or three times just because I had a friend who lived there, but besides that I didn’t feel like I belonged there at all.” His friends were not White higher class people, but were “maybe the only Hispanics I think in their building.” Romeo felt that when he visited the hall,

> I stuck out a lot, so just the color of my skin and there would be just groups of people that already have their friends. So every time I would go there it would just be me and my two friends that lived there.

He could tell the students that lived there were from affluent backgrounds because they had “nicer things, the way they dress, the cars they have,” which he was able to see in the nearby student parking lot. Clearly for Romeo, not seeing others that looked like he did in terms of racial or ethnic diversity was a very salient aspect of his experience. However his perspective of the residence hall also exemplified how socioeconomic status played a role in this dynamic.

Romeo also lacked a sense of belonging at the university football stadium, but initially described his feelings as stemming from being in a crowded and hectic environment. He also echoed this rationale when describing his lack of belonging in other

non-academic spaces such as the student union and dining hall. Yet through further discussion, it was clear that Romeo's deterrence to spaces that were overcrowded was at least partially attributed to not seeing others that looked like him within those crowds. For instance, when asked if Romeo would still feel comfortable at his church if instead of 40 members there were 300, he replied "it would change, but it wouldn't change enough to the measure where I wouldn't feel like I belonged. So that would be a good example of overcrowded but I still feel like I belong."

Reflecting back to what it was about the people in these "overcrowded" spaces that caused him to feel like he did not belong Romeo concluded,

> …I see them as different, I know we could get along, just differences hold us back from interacting with one another. And so the differences in our background really separate us. And I don't feel like they would understand me and where I come from as I would from their perspective. So I feel like the differences really play a role in how I feel belonging and sense of community.

Romeo was not the only participant that saw White students as being different and, as a result, difficult to connect with. Experiencing difficulty connecting with White peers was also a foundational component of why Paloma had mixed feelings about her connection to the University A Orientation Team. She thought "this was a community I felt like I belonged, but at the same time I didn't." Three of her other sorority sisters were orientation leaders along with Paloma, which positively affected her sense of belonging in that space. In addition, she really valued that it "was a great leadership opportunity and then basically I was getting paid too." She also "had the opportunity to reach out to a bunch of other students," which was important to Paloma. However, at the same time she

sometimes lacked a sense of belonging because she was one of few racially minoritized students and often had trouble connecting with some of the other students. She described that

> out of 40 students, there's only about 10 multicultural students within that so it does kind of, sometimes I didn't have a problem with it, but at the same time I kind of felt awkward because I don't know what to talk about.

Feeling different from her peers made it difficult for her to relate to them and have meaningful conversations, which negatively influenced her sense of belonging.

Fernando also experienced difficulty connecting with his White peers as one of his residence hall's board members during his freshman year. Fernando explained that he "took the position just because I felt like it would fluff up a resume." However Fernando did not think that taking the position in his hall positively contributed to his sense of belonging. Even though he had a position, he still did not feel like an important part of the organization because "I was like the only Hispanic…I would try to talk to them, but I just don't feel the connection. We just don't talk about the same things." Although Fernando heard that "in the dorms that you make lasting friendships…for me, I was there one semester and then I moved to an apartment. And the people that I met there, I never really talked to again besides my roommate."

Mitigating and amplifying feelings of marginalization and belonging. Participants' feelings of marginalization and belonging in particular microsystems were mitigated and amplified by their interactions within that space. For instance, there were two notable locations—the University B TRIO SSSP Office and the University A and B Multicultural Centers—where, in addition to the increased sense of belonging

participants experienced by simply seeing others that looked like them, participant sense of belonging was amplified through the interactions the participants had with others within those spaces.

The participants viewed their interactions within the TRIO SSSP Office and the Multicultural Centers as distinct from the way they perceived campus norms—a reflection of Strange and Banning's (2015) socially constructed environments, "the collective subjective views and experiences of participant observers" (p. 117). Several of the participants at University A discussed a general perspective that as part of the campus climate, the students at their respective institution did not interact with other students. For example, Romeo described the students on campus as "introverted." He explained, "If you don't know someone and just walk up to them they'll just kind of look at you like why is this person talking to me? No matter what race you are." As a result, spaces in which people simply talked to the participants were often described as being unique and an important dimension of their sense of belonging in that space. Notably these spaces were often *where people look like me*. For instance, even though Romeo did not know everybody that entered the TRIO Office, he thought that when he was in that place,

> if you go up to someone and start a conversation, you have more of a chance of hitting it off with them than going up to somebody random on campus. It's like a little zone where it's just students that are just like you. Different ethnicities, so there's White, Black, Mexican, Asian, all that. So it's very diverse. I really like that.

To Romeo, people's willingness to engage in conversations with others in the TRIO Office was very much intertwined with being in a space with others that he saw as similar to himself.

Davina had similar experiences in the TRIO SSSP Office and noted that "the receptionists are super nice so they would help me out if I needed anything." In fact "the receptionist was the first one I made the connection to… it felt good, it felt like a safe spot to me if I ever needed anything to go to her." The students in the space were friendly too, Davina reflected, "people do say hi to each other even if they don't know me. So that was kind of surprising to me that people were saying hi to me and didn't know me." Davina further explained that some students asked her other questions about herself like whether she was a freshman and what her major was. While these interactions may seem meaningless to some, they were very important to Davina. When Davina described the people on campus, she said

> I guess if you're talking about the White people I guess, they don't really pay attention to us in a way I guess. And I see that a lot like in my classes to be honest. Like because I'm an engineering student so already I'm a minority—a woman in engineering, but then I'm a Latina in engineering. So it kind of makes me feel a little bit smaller.

Because Davina felt marginalized and ignored in her day to day on campus, even the small interactions she experienced in the TRIO Office caused her to feel a sense of belonging there.

The unique interactions Romeo and Davina experienced in the TRIO Office was also reflected in Paloma's identification of the Multicultural Center on campus as a place

of belonging. Paloma thought the Multicultural Center was "really inviting…everyone is so welcoming like the faculty, they see you and say 'oh hello, how's your day?'" Paloma asserted that it was also easy to make conversation with other students "you're just like 'Oh hi how are you?' and stuff like that and you instantly make friends."

Unlike University A, participants at University B did not necessarily describe their sense of belonging in the Multicultural Cetner in terms of their lack of interactions with other students on campus, however they still recognized the Center as being a unique place they could easily connect with others. Omi for instance enjoyed talking to people in the Multicultural Center at University B. She explained that she will just go in and if someone is at the large table in the lounge she "will just sit down and be like 'hey,' just strike up talking." Omi's willingness to start conversations with people she did not know was unique to the Multicultural Center and was not something Omi would do anywhere. She said, "I think just there is the only place I would want to talk to someone and not be scared to sit with them or anything like that. Because I feel like anywhere else I wouldn't." Omi's sense of belonging in the Multicultural Center was evidence of her comfort being in a place where she could "find someone that looks like me or is a minority."

As reflected in the descriptions of participant experiences in the University B TRIO SSSP Office and the University A and B Multicultural Centers, an important component of being in a place *where people look like me* that shaped the extent that participants felt a sense of belonging was interactions with others within that space. While feeling marginalized as a racially minoritized individual in a particular place could initially cause individuals to lack a sense of belonging, having friends in those spaces

could help to mitigate that effect. As previously noted in Luis's CBA classes, the only sense of belonging that he experienced in those settings was from coordinating schedules with his friends and sitting together in class. Another example of friends mitigating feelings of marginalization was Omi's experience with the chain, Starbucks Coffee. Omi explained that she typically did not feel a sense of belonging in Starbucks because "that's more for White people." Omi thought that any time she went, everyone there was "pretty much White people" and that it was "rare" to see Hispanics. In the times she has gone, Omi "got stares" from others and just felt "uncomfortable." She recently went to a Starbucks with a group of classmates, though, and thought "it didn't feel that uncomfortable because they were there… But I think if I was there by myself that would be really weird." Omi's experience is an example of how spaces where the people are predominantly White seemed uncomfortable for some participants like Omi, but were less so when they were surrounded by friends or people they knew cared for them.

In terms of mitigating feelings of marginalization in a particular place, something as simple as engaging in genuine and meaningful conversation with others could also positively influence participant sense of belonging. In regard to academic spaces on campus, nearly all participants' initial shock of being one of few or the only racially minoritized individual in their classes negatively altered their initial sense of belonging in those spaces. For example, being in a classroom where Christina was only one of a few racially minoritized individuals was difficult, "because it's like I walked into the classrooms and you saw no one that you could identify with in a sense. And I think that in a way affects how you feel. So I didn't feel I could be me, I didn't feel accepted, I felt different." To Christina, her sense of alienation was made worse by the fact that "no one

really tried to talk to me." She could think of no other reason this was the case except that "I didn't look like most of them." Christina thought that in the occasions when they did talk to her, "it was different. They way they spoke to me." Ultimately the interactions she had with her peers or a lack of such interactions caused Christina to think "ok I can't really relate to a lot of you" and resulted in a lack of a sense of belonging in those settings.

Christina's experience was different from participants such as Lori who was able to normalize feeling different in classroom environments. For Lori, the initial shock of being in a predominantly White classroom was "very visual." Lori described, "I would observe like oh there's all these White people and I'm only one out of three that aren't White and it's like woah… And they always said this was such a diverse school, but obviously—to me it's not." However unlike Christina, Lori reflected,

> I had many White friends in high school and elementary school. Some of my best friends are White, you know? So I've never really felt out of the loop I guess just because I've always interacted with them and just clicked with them.

Though being in an environment where she felt visually different was "sometimes uncomfortable," over time Lori was able to "ignore it" because she still felt connected to her peers in that setting.

This semester Omi had an experience that helped to mitigate her feelings of marginalization as a racially minoritized individual in her class. She began her math block, the math related courses she needed to teach in an elementary education setting, in her program and realized she was the only Latina in the class. Omi thought it "was really intimidating at first because I'm the only one and it's just all White people, there's like

19 White people and then me." Omi felt so intimidated that she questioned, "Should I change my major?...and go into Spanish or Latin American studies?" However Omi stuck with it and found that "they were all very welcoming, which really surprised me. That was the most welcoming group of people I've been around so far." Omi attributed some of her being surprised that the students were welcoming to "being rejected by White people" in high school. Omi said that despite coming into the course with that fear, the fact that it did not happen "was a really good feeling. I feel really comfortable around these people. And it's nice that they talk to me and ask me just like anything really." Despite feeling initially marginalized by not seeing others that were from racially minoritized backgrounds, feeling accepted and valued in an academic space was an important factor in recentering Omi and, as a result, positively influenced her ability to experience a sense of belonging.

In contrast with ways that student sense of belonging was amplified by interactions with others in a particular setting, there were also other ways feelings of marginalization as one of the only or few racially minoritized individuals was exacerbated by the people in a particular place through othering experiences. Omi's sense of belonging at the University B football stadium illustrated how othering experiences could influence student sense of belonging. When Omi reflected on a specific time she felt a sense of belonging within the greater campus community when she first started at University B she thought of "my first football game." Despite her initial positive perspective of the stadium as physically welcoming, she and one of her sorority sisters recently had an experience with another student that made her feel like she did not belong at the game. Omi and her sorority sister were approached during the game by a girl that

asked "'do you guys have tickets here?' And we were like yeah. And she said 'are you sure?'" Omi was upset by the experience because

> she just asked us, no one else and we were the only Hispanics there. And I don't know, I took it personally…I was like that's kind of weird that we were the only ones that were asked that question out of so many people there, why couldn't they have asked the people in front of us or the people behind us?...I think it looks bad that you're just asking the Hispanic people there…That kind of hurt.

Omi added that when she was among friends, "I feel super comfortable." Her sense of comfort when she was with friends at the stadium was an example of how people in a particular setting could mitigate feelings of marginalization. However when "it's just me and one other person and we're just surrounded by random people we don't even know it's really uncomfortable." In these situations, "I feel uncomfortable talking to anyone around me about football because it's like, I don't know they just look at you really weird." Omi did not think people looked at everyone "weird" like this and that it had more to do with the fact that she was Hispanic. She reasoned, "football is not really a big thing for our culture, it's more soccer." She noted, "I rarely see any Hispanics at football games…So of course when they [White people] see one they're just like so mesmerized that we show up." Even though a football game was the first place Omi really felt a sense of belonging on campus, this incident caused her to feel marginalized as an other and, as a result, she felt uncomfortable at the games.

Similar to Omi, othering experiences caused Fernando to lack a sense of belonging at University A football games. Fernando recently went to his first football tailgate with one of his fraternity brothers. Despite the fact that football was not really

"their thing," they went because it was homecoming. However it was not a positive experience and Fernando did not feel comfortable in that setting at all. In addition to feeling different as one of the only Latinos at the tailgate, Fernando reflected, "I just felt judgment like people were just staring. Like we're the only Latinos that were tailgating there and we were surrounded by a bunch of Caucasians. Obviously we're there to try to have fun…but you just feel judgment." Fernando further explained that it was not even primarily the students—which he thought were more discreet with their stares—but more so "the actual [city's] community itself." Fernando only stayed for the tailgate and left afterward, but his brother went to the game alone. However he told Fernando that it was an "awkward experience" because "people kept staring at him…Like he went to see the game but didn't want to be there anymore."

These othering experiences also manifested in classroom settings. An example of this was an incident where Davina felt racially marginalized in one of her classes as the only racially minoritized student in the class. Davina admitted that even before this event she did not feel very comfortable participating in class, but she "definitely" went back to feeling different afterward. The day of the presidential election, Davina was in a class of "less than 30 or 40 students" when the professor, a White male, encouraged the students to "go out and vote." He asserted, "I don't care who you vote for just vote." Davina explained the instructor then asked the class, "Who would trust Trump?' And more than half the class's hands go up." Davina was "the only person of Color" and after seeing the class's response she thought, "I feel extremely small right now." The instructor then asked who would trust Hillary Clinton "and nobody raised their hand." Davina did not raise her hand either because she felt intimidated by the class majority. Davina said

beyond one individual that spoke with an accent, but she was unsure of how she identified, “as a Brown little girl I’m the only one there because everybody else is White.” Davina became emotional and started to cry when she said, “since that day I don’t feel entirely safe in that class.”

When the instructor asked everybody to raise their hand, Davina was somewhat “shocked” that so many people did. She thought “a lot of the White males would do it, but this is a leadership class so there’s more girls in this class than men so a lot of these girls raised their hands.” It was upsetting to Davina to see so many hands go up because of the disparaging things Trump said about Mexicans such as, “when Mexico sends their people they’re not sending their best.” She thought that by saying things like this, Trump was “just labeling and painting us with a paintbrush, that’s what upset me the most. I’m like no, we’re not all that.” Davina recognized that

> some people do want him as president because you know he has – they say he has a good tax plan, he has a good plan for some stuff…So it’s just like, you can ignore the stuff that he wants to do to people of Color just because he wants to do good for the rich White people?

Now, going back to that class after this incident, Davina said “I just feel smaller when I walk in. I don’t know, it’s just not a welcoming environment I guess. It’s not something I look forward to going to.”

Another phenomenon that a few of the participants reflected on that amplified their feelings of marginalization was feeling an added burden to serve as a representation of all people of Color or of the Latinx community specifically. For Juan, being one of few racially minoritized students forced him to feel as though he had to serve as a

representation of all racially minoritized people, which added additional stress to his experience. Juan explained that because he was one of the only racially minoritized students in his classes, he felt extra pressure "because I feel like everyone noticed when I would say anything in class. Everyone paid extra attention so I don't know if it was true or not, but that just comes in with the imposter phenomenon." Juan further explained that when they worked in groups he "felt like no one expected me to say anything in the group, but when I did say something I felt like I had to be very punctual, very precise in what I was saying."

Similar to Juan, Participant01 and Hector also experienced added pressure as a racially minoritized individual in times when individuals in class deferred to them to speak on behalf of the experiences of all racially minoritized people. Participant01 explained that it was uncomfortable when "everybody looks at me" in times when she was "the only student of Color in my class" and the students "have questions about ethnicity or race." Hector experienced a similar phenomenon in his classes when they discussed diversity issues or the Latinx community specifically and he was deferred to for his opinion. In these situations, Hector tried to "tell them the things that I know not to do and say around us that like might start some conflict. Just be nice and if you want to learn more about us, talk to us, don't be afraid." Though Hector seemed to welcome these types of questions, he did not enjoy feeling like a representative when it came to his academic performance in terms of things like class presentations. To Hector, being

> the only Mexican in the class…It brings in like a big burden on me and some other students too that like I might be representing the whole Latino community. So whatever I do, whatever I say I think about the White populated class might

think oh he's the same as the rest of them or something. I'm just one person, I'm not representing the whole community. I'm only representing myself.

Where My Racial Identity and Culture is Recognized and Valued: Campus and External Microsystems

> *Knowing how negative he [Trump] is towards just so many people…the fact that University A allowed him to come here and share that negativity with the students that are paying to get an education and feel secure at University A…what the hell is that? You know?...Just the fact that [the President] was with him…Just, it felt like betrayal*. (Fernando)

Fernando's sense of belonging at University A was completely disrupted by the University's support of Donald Trump's visit to campus during the 2016 presidential election. Fernando further reflected that following the event, many students "didn't feel safe" on campus at University A. Similar to Fernando's reaction to Donald Trump's visit, several participants from University A felt that Donald Trump's visit to the campus during his campaign negatively affected their sense of belonging at the University. Their reflections on this event underscored the role of the characteristic *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued* in Latinx student sense of belonging. Participants generally felt a sense of belonging in spaces where their racial and cultural identities as Latinxs and racially minoritized individuals were recognized or valued, whereas in spaces where they felt devalued as a racially minoritized person or Latinx specifically, they did not feel like they belonged. *Though where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued* manifested itself primarily through Strange and Banning's physical and human aggregate environmental types, campus climate and

organizational culture—aspects of the socially constructed environment—also played an important role throughout. The following sections first describe ways the physical environment, visible or tangible aspects of the environment, came into play in participant perceptions of the extent to which their racial and cultural identities were recognized and valued. The sections then examine how the human aggregate environment as reflected by the people in a given place affected participant sense of belonging. As they emerge, participant experiences that were directly related to elements of the socially constructed environment and chronosystem, "the historical period in which the person lives" (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 641), are also discussed.

The physical environment as representations of racial and cultural identity. Culture was something that all participants discussed in relation to their sense of belonging on campus. There were a number of ways that participants' felt their racial or cultural identities were recognized or valued through the physical environment. For one, elements of the physical environment often served as a representation of racial or cultural identities. For instance, Luis and Juan both identified physical structures on their campus that they felt reflected their culture and increased their sense of belonging at their respective University. This semester, Luis was excited to walk across campus and see a new food truck that featured Mexican food. The food truck caught his attention because it was the only food truck Luis had seen on campus and although the student Union had some fast food options, none served traditional foods from the Latinx community. Even though Luis is not Mexican, when he saw the food truck he viewed it as a representation of the Latinx culture, which boosted his sense of belonging.

On campus at University B, there was a statue that was culturally symbolic to Juan. Juan explained that the sculpture depicted a man carrying a loved one across the border. Juan noted that the sculpture was the only physical thing on campus that he has connected with culturally. To him it "represents University A's acknowledgement of Mexican Americans at the University" and "shows that people are aware that Mexican Americans are on campus." The statue was also of personal importance to him "because my dad did cross the river. So I think it is pretty symbolic in that I appreciate what he did for me." Seeing the statue on campus was important to Juan and something that reinforced his place at University A.

Particular places also served as physical representations of culture when participants associated cultural events with those spaces. Participant01 identified two examples of this on her campus. For one, the courtyard at University B was a place where she felt "the biggest sense of belonging because we've had multicultural Greek events [there]." For instance Pi Delta had their new member showcase at the courtyard. They also had other cultural events in the area. For example, the prior week they had a big outdoor event as part of Hispanic Heritage Month. Participant01 described that they "had music and food and everything and it was really nice just to be like 'oh I'm listening to Spanish music on campus.'" They had also had other important social justice events there such as the Black Lives Matter rally and a rally against the North Dakota Access Pipeline. Overall, Participant01 thought the courtyard was a place where you were "able to express yourself." Participant01 also associated a sense of belonging with particular event rooms in the Union. Her sense of belonging in places in and around the Union was partially because of her familiarity with those spaces, but the Union was also where

events such as the annual stroll off in the Greek community was held, which was a "very diverse" event. She added, "When you're in there you see all the diversity. It's like oh this is all the minority students on campus." Because these events occurred in spaces in and around the Union, Participant01 associated those places with aspects of her racial and cultural identity. Thus, she was able to associate a sense of belonging in particular spaces even when the events were not occurring.

There were also ways the physical environment reflected elements of the chronosystem in terms of the 2016 presidential election. These physical indicators of the chronosystem were also a reflection of issues of campus climate, which is part of the socially constructed environment (Strange & Banning, 2015) and played an influential role in participants' perception of whether their racial or cultural identity was valued in a particular setting and whether they belonged. One example of how the physical environment devalued participants as Latinxs on campus was the appearance of "White supremacy posters" on campus at University A. Christina described,

> I can't think of exactly what it said, but it was like the jist of back like I don't know how many years ago, the U.S. was 90% White and now it's 60% - do you want to become a minority in your own country? And the second one was like White students you're not alone, celebrate your heritage or something like that. So I guess that just proves again that the campus is not welcoming, that's racism.

Christina recognized that because "no one really knows who put them up" that it "could've just been multicultural students." However what made the appearance of the posters even more significant to Christina was the university President's response.

Usually he sends out emails "when things happen," though Christina usually does not read them, just more so skims them. She explained that he

> sent out an email because the posters were taken down, but he didn't touch on how it could affect people or how it was racist, he just said it didn't follow the poster policies so they had to be taken down. So that just says a lot.

In Christina's perspective, knowing that these racial posters appeared on campus confirmed to her that there were students that did not welcome her racial or cultural identity at University A. The perception that others did not welcome Christina's racial or cultural identity was further reinforced by the lack of support the president communicated by failing to directly address the racist nature of the incident or confirm the value of racially minoritized populations on campus.

Christina was not the only participant affected by these posters. Even though Hector had a generally positive view of University A, as a whole he thought it was "tough to say" whether the campus community was accepting of individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. He explained, "I feel that [since] the posters for White supremacy have been around campus there is a lot of fear." Hector felt that the posters were a result of Donald Trump's negative messages regarding racially minoritized individuals and immigrants duiring his presidential campaign. He expressed that it was difficult to feel as though the campus was accepting when there were "students around who are still I don't know, like with Trump are still trying to spread that White supremacy around the campus area." Juan's perspective aligned with Hector's sentiment as he thought the posters were "actually kind of scary."

Weeks later, in the morning of my final interview with Davina, another poster was found on campus at University A—this time it "was taped to the LGBT Student Services window." Davina showed me an image of the poster. Though Davina was unaware, the poster's central image was taken from Nazi Party propaganda. The poster included a symbol that also appeared on the previous posters, leading Davina to assert that it was "from the same group." The poster was just found that morning and the president of the university had just sent out a video addressing it and other racial issues on campus. In some ways, Davina was happy to see the president's response, but at the same time she thought he should have addressed these issues a long time ago.

Another way that the physical environment affected participant sense of belonging on campus was through physical representations of support for Donald Trump as president. Nine noted that on the "first day of school, the people wrote on the sidewalk 'Make America Great again and build that wall' in front of the library." Nine's sense of belonging at University A had overall been negatively impinged on by the campus climate due to the, at that time, upcoming election. At the root of Nine's decreased sense of belonging was that she felt racial incidents like this were essentially an attack on her identity. She described,

> I felt like I belonged less in this community just because of my identity being Latina…the whole Donald Trump thing and what he said about Latinos and what he said about Mexicans, because my family is Mexican. I think I just feel a little bit more out of place in the campus and in the community as a whole…Just been a little bit more careful about what I say.

Juan also noticed a lot of chalking on sidewalks in regard to Trump and Hillary. However he added "all the Trump chalkings I've seen today have been converted to like – they'll put hearts in front of the T and the P and say I heart rump." Juan thought it was "kind of a weird thing to see."

Participant01 also described seeing a physical representation of support for Trump on campus at University B. One day Participant01 was walking through University B in what was "pretty much the middle of campus and there was a flag saying 'make America great again.'" In Participant01's mind, the flag was a reflection of the students on campus that supported Trump—and in her mind a division. At the time, the election was still a ways away, so she believed "a lot of students that support him [Trump] will kind of stand back and not say much because they're like we can get backlash or something." However she believed if he won the election his supporters would be emboldened to speak out "like oh we're going to let you know we don't like you or you shouldn't be here." Overall in terms of campus climate and support for diversity in terms of the elections, Participant01 thought faculty and staff would offer support, but with students "I feel there would be this like them and us."

The role of people in recognizing and valuing racial and cultural identity. The people, or the human aggregate environment, within a particular setting were the most influential aspect of the environment in terms of participant sense of belonging. Though it was important for participants to see reflections of their own identities in terms of being in places *where people look like me*, it was also important for them to feel as though the people in a given setting recognized and valued their racial and cultural identities. The extent to which participant racial and cultural identities were valued was

an indication of the campus climate and culture—both of which are elements of the socially constructed environment. For instance Hector thought that seeing an array of students from different backgrounds attend diversity centered events on campus "does help to make students feel a little more welcome." Hector further explained that having the support for these events from all types of students showed that "diversity is still going on…it's still there, pockets of it." Many of the participants discussed particular offices or departments on campus that hosted cultural or diversity focused events, which again reinforced that their identities were recognized and valued on campus. For instance Omi explained that the Multicultural Center and the DREAMS Program at University B hosted events such as a Hispanic Heritage Month series.

Luis talked about how the day after the presidential election the Multicultural Center opened an event where they could "provide support to students…to process their feelings and emotions." Luis said there was a diverse group of students and faculty at the event and it was his "first time seeing the lounge that full." Luis thought that the whole day made it clear "who really is there in support of the students" in terms of "who actually cares, who actually doesn't." Notably as reflected in Luis's quote, students also often saw initiatives through particular offices or departments as a sign of their support rather than the university as a whole. Often times this meant that the university was seen as unsupportive or simply unresponsive to issues or events that were important to the students such as the effects of the presidential election.

In addition to occasions in which people showed that they recognized and valued participants' racial and cultural identities, there were also occasions when participants felt their identity as a Latinx was devalued by individuals or groups within that setting. One

example of when a participant felt that their identity as a racially minoritized individual and Latinx was undermined was during an event Participant01 attended on campus her freshman year. She could not recall what the event was or who exactly hosted it, but it featured culturally offensive skits. She described that during the skits they

> did very stereotypical ways of presenting ethnicities so for Latinos, they did a very stereotypical Mexican with like a poncho and a sombrero and it was very insulting. And then for like the Black community it was like the fried chicken. And that's where everybody was like woah what's going on? It's very stereotypical like obviously that's not how we present ourselves on campus. So that's where we were like woah, I had never really experienced like that stereotypical way of thinking until I got here.

After the event, students were discussing the event in the Multicultural Affairs Center and "everybody retaliated and were like 'this isn't right.'" The students went to the Dean and he sent out an apology, however they could not pinpoint which students were responsible so none of the students received any repercussions for their actions.

Another notable incident that several of the participants at University A discussed that devalued their identities and was again an indication of the chronosystem, occurred when then presidential candidate, Donald Trump, visited University A during his campaign. Trump's visit was the only occasion where Paloma ever experienced any overt discriminatory or racial incidents. She explained that a group of students, including "a lot of Latinos and multicultural people" in addition to Paloma and her brother were silently protesting "against Donald Trump being on campus, especially after all the stuff he said." While the students were standing silently with their signs of protest,

> family members, older people, people within the University A community, people within the [other school's] community and stuff like that. They were just saying like go back home to where you came from, this and that. Whatever Donald Trump was saying they basically supported it. So you know how Donald Trump says all Mexicans are criminals, racists, this and that. They supported that.

Paloma described that "people were spitting at the protestors." Furthermore, "one of my brother's fraternity brothers was holding a sign and this girl just comes up and tears it." Paloma and the other students were very upset by the incident, "it was kind of hard for all of us to stay quiet, but we had to because if not they would tag us as oh they did something, they did this they did that." Paloma explained that there was an even stronger need for the protesters to keep their composure because, "when it comes to minorities it's like I feel like one person does something bad, everyone…attributes that act to the whole community."

In the end Paloma thought, "it was just appalling to see so many people be so racist." The protest opened her eyes to something she had never really experienced before. It also changed Paloma's perspectives day to day on campus at University A and "when I started noticing a lot of the prejudices that people had and the stereotypes that people had and stuff like that and saw how it was affecting my friends who actually looked Latino." Paloma thought, "it was kind of really sad to see how during orientation and stuff they say 'oh we're the University A family, we're very strong and very united,' and then things like this happen."

Once campus climate issues such as what occurred during Donald Trump's visit to University A happened, even when upper level administration attempted to address the

issue it was difficult to repair student perceptions of whether their racial and cultural identities were valued on campus. Nine explained that after Donald Trump's visit to University A, "a student group formed and started demanding" actions from the University president. In response, they held a forum including "the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Dean of Students, and the President." The forum featured a panel of students from different racial backgrounds in addition to a person that identified with the LGBT community that was tasked to share student experiences and "make their demands on behalf of the group." Input was collected from "all students then [they] kind of synthesized it and gave it to that panel," which then shared what it was like to be "a student of Color at University A." The discussion brought up issues such as "White privilege," which Nine did not think was "something University A's campus has really thought about before." The entire event lasted about two to three hours and involved a discussion as well as questions from the University president. There was a point that the President said, "I'm colorblind I don't see what other people's race is." Nine reflected that "everyone in the room was just like 'oh no you did not just say that.'" At the end of the event, the President expressed that he "didn't realize students of Color still experienced these type of things at this institution."

In response, a Chief Diversity Officer was appointed to work alongside the President and a Multicultural Liaison Officer was assigned to the University A Police Department. In addition they made plans to "make education more inclusive," though Nine was not sure "how far all that's gotten." Although she thought these were good steps, since these climate issues happened on campus, Nine has not "felt comfortable and I know lots of people haven't felt comfortable on campus." Similar to Paloma, Nine noted that

this was "the first time I experienced anything like that where I was like wow – people don't actually want me here even though I was born here type of thing." Fernando thought that these steps were "just a band-aid to cover up a bigger issue that's going on with this campus."

Where I Am Valued and Cared For: Campus and External Microsystems

> *[My mentor and sorority advisor] always greets me with 'hi mija how are you?'…my mom always calls me that…just that simple word like it's so simple, but it kind of means a lot and just makes you feel safer. It makes you feel like there's a place where you belong on campus*. (Nine)

Nine had a special relationship with her mentor and sorority advisor Dalihla, who worked in the University A Multicultural Center. Nine asserted, "she knows me very well, we're really close…every time I see Dalihla I give her a hug and kiss." Nine reflected that when Dalihla used the word mija, it brought in a "family aspect" and was "so simple, but it kind of means a lot and just makes you feel safer, it makes you feel like there's a place where you belong on campus." Nine's relationship with Dalihla was an example of how participants' sense of belonging was positively affected by being in spaces where they felt valued and cared for. Feeling valued and cared for was described by the participants in several ways, yet it was apparent that individuals associated a sense of belonging with particular people that cared for them and offered support, thus the influence of the human aggregate environment was evident. The physical environment also played a role in terms of serving as a tangible representative of the care and love participants felt in particular settings. For example, when discussing places of belonging,

one physical aspect of University A that caused Romeo to feel a sense of belonging was hearing the bells ring on campus. He described,

> when the bells ring it reminds me of the church bells I have at home so everytime I hear it, it triggers me and I think of my mom and parents and family back at home. That's one of the reasons I really like University A.

Even though Romeo did not feel a sense of belonging at University A, this element of the physical environment served as a reminder of another place of belonging for Romeo, which offered him comfort.

Where I am valued and cared for was also somewhat embodied in Strange and Banning's (2015) socially constructed environments. Though this study's analysis did not delve into the collective views of the campus as a whole, it did shed light on campus social norms as perceived by participants. The following sections will present examples of how participants discussed the role of faculty, staff, and students in terms of the extent to which they felt valued and cared for, and in turn, whether they belonged.

Feeling valued and cared for. In addition to family, many of the participants also identified particular faculty and staff members that showed the participants they were valued and cared for. Recently Romeo had such an experience with one of his professors. He explained that he was behind in one of his courses and arrived "late multiple times. Enough to bring it to the instructor's attention." His professor emailed him "and said 'hey can you stop by my office? I need to talk to you.'" Essentially she asked Romeo, "'What's going on? I know you've been late in lecture and lab, your performance is dropping.'" Romeo was grateful that "she reached out to me and took the initiative to pull me aside before things got worse in her class." This was the first

instructor that has personally reached out to Romeo at University A even though there had been situations where he needed it before. Due to his prior experiences, Romeo assumed a lack of attention to individual students was just part of campus norms in terms of faculty. Romeo thought his courses were sometimes so large that it was "hard" for faculty to focus on one student or perhaps "not really important to them to focus on one when you have four- or 500 other students you're trying to teach." Having an instructor reach out to him separately to check in on his progress was significant to him and he now associates a sense of belonging with that professor. He further elucidated, "I talked to her and she gave me advice, things to do things not to do. And we've had reoccurring meetings. So it's just me going in there and her checking on me to see if I'm doing good."

Outside of the classroom, Romeo has had a few other faculty and staff members at University A that showed a vested interest in his success such as a Hispanic professor he "met during orientation" that "helped me register for my first semester here." The Hispanic professor was also the advisor for Nu Sigma and referred Romeo to the organization as well as other student groups on campus. Romeo asserted, "he helped me start on the right step." The individual in charge of the learning community Romeo was part of also played an important role in his experience. He explained, "she has events for engineering multicultural students. So I still attend those and talk to her when I need something. She's definitely welcoming, always open, flexible schedule." Romeo thought if he had not met any of these individuals, "I don't think I'd be in college still honestly. I think I would have dropped out by now…They reached out to me before it got to a point where I sank—I drowned instead of swimming." He added that these individuals

suggested resources for Romeo to use. He heard of these before through things like orientation, but took it more seriously from them because "when you have an advisor tell you hey you should really do this—it's really something you should take to heart and use." Even though Romeo did not feel a sense of belonging at University A, he associated a sense of belonging with these individuals who clearly had a positive affect on his experience.

In addition to faculty, participants from both institutions also reflected on the significance of university staff support in terms of their sense of belonging. For example Davina did not originally go to the Multicultural Center because she "already felt like I had my home with the Student Support System Program." However after she met one of the Multicultural Center staff members she "started to go there as well because I felt like I had another safe spot there with her." Davina was able to make a connection with the staff member because

> she's Latina too so…I don't know she's just a really bubbly person. Everytime you see her she's like how are you doing? But really how are you doing like physically are you taking care of yourself? Is there anything I can do to help you?

The Multicultural Center staff member showed Davina that she was genuine and "really just wants to help you." Davina explained that this relationship was something that she needed and considered her as "another mom on campus." Not only did her connection to this individual increase her sense of belonging with the staff member, but it also exposed her to the Multicultural Center, which is another place of belonging for Davina.

Likewise, Juan had relationships with his academic advisor as well as the chapter advisor for Omega Iota in which he valued and cared for. Juan has been assigned to his

advisor since he transitioned to his current major. His relationship with this individual has "definitely grown" over time. He reflected,

> the first semester I was appointed to him, I was kind of hesitant, but after having two or three meetings with him I realized he was generally a nice guy, super flexible, and wanted to help. So after that first semester I was able to drop by whenever.

Juan explained that now "he's usually pretty flexible with his hours. Most of the time I don't even set up an appointment I just go in." Knowing that someone was willing to make time for him was an important part of why Juan felt valued and cared for. Juan experienced the same dynamic in his chapter advisor's office, where he "can go in there when I want. She's usually pretty busy, but if I catch her and she's free in there I don't have to set up an appointment. She'll just ask me to walk in whenever." His advisor has had that role over the last two years. Juan explained that she was supportive and a good resource for the fraternity, "she'll come to our events. She'll come to meetings when we ask her to. But for event planning, she knows who to contact if she doesn't have the answer." Juan felt supported and valued by these individuals and, in turn, considered their offices as places of belonging.

Feeling devalued. While it was clear there were particular individuals on campus that showed the participants they were valued and cared for, participants also identified experiences that caused them to feel devalued and negatively affected their sense of belonging. For example, Juan's relationships with his academic and chapter advisors were in opposition to the experiences he had with staff in two locations on campus. One of these included the campus Speaker Committee Office where he recently had a negative

"interaction" with the leader of the committee. Omega Iota requested funding to bring a speaker to campus which was usually "no big deal." However unlike previous experiences, "for some reason they wanted a presentation about the speaker." Juan thought the request was "fine, but it was just not a good experience. The coordinator kept putting me down during the presentation and didn't let me finish my thoughts." Juan felt like the worst part of the experience was that "she wasn't letting me finish my thoughts and presentation. Because I think I maybe got five or six complete sentences in without being interrupted." Even though "everyone else was pretty considerate," the fact that the committee leader displayed behavior that made it apparent to Juan that she did not value what he had to say, he now identified the Speaker Committee Office as a place he did not belong.

Juan also lacked a sense of belonging in the university Financial Aid Office. Even though it was welcoming in the sense that he knew some of the students that worked in the lobby, he had poor interactions there with the professional staff. Juan has only had to go in there a couple times "thankfully because I had a scholarship" and even had different staff members work with him each time. However in "the few times I have gone in there to talk to a financial advisor, I felt really rushed and I felt like…[I] wasn't welcomed." Although the staff members were listening to his questions, they were just responding with two to three words—"no that's not right, that's right, ok. Any more questions?" The experience left Juan feeling "like they had better things to do." Furthermore, the times Juan has gone into the Financial Aid Office "were in the middle of the semester so there was no one applying for financial aid anymore…there was no one there and they still

rushed me out the door." These interactions communicated to Juan that he was not valued.

One example of a place where Romeo did not feel valued and lacked a sense of belonging within was at campus engineering career fair, or as Romeo described, "speed dating for jobs." Romeo went to the event because he needed a job, however thousands of students and hundreds of companies also attended the event, which was a large part of why Romeo did not feel as though he belonged in this place. For Romeo, it was not so much his discomfort with the large crowd, but more so that "I just feel like I was a number. So I didn't really feel like I was valued as much…I talked to people. I don't feel like I stuck out enough." Though having the event served an essential need for students such as Romeo, Romeo's interactions with the people caused him to feel as though he did not matter in that space.

Where I Have a Role or Responsibility: Campus and External Microsystems

> *The only reason that I joined [the transfer support organization] was to help other minority students that were transferring to University A. I wanted them to not have to go through the mental thoughts that I went through when I first visited University A…I wanted to help break down some of those barriers that students of Color may come across while visiting University A.* (Delta)

Delta joined a transfer support organization during his second semester because he wanted to help other Latinxs as they transitioned to University A. Having the opportunity to serve in the transfer support organization and to help others positively reinforced his sense of belonging within those spaces. Participants often identified places where they had a role or responsibility as places of belonging, and as illuminated in

Delta's quote, several participants specifically reflected on ways that having a role or responsibility in terms of helping others boosted their sense of belonging. In addition to the human aggregate environment, *where I have a role or responsibility* is the central characteristic where aspects of Strange and Banning's (2015) organizational environmental dimension came into play. Organizational environments are defined by goals and how those goals are achieved within a given organization. While participant organizational experiences did not necessarily take place at the institutional level, they did connect to roles within a given setting or microsystem. In these settings, participants' sense of purpose and whether they could offer a contribution influenced the extent to which they felt that they belonged in that space. This sense of purpose materialized within organizations or groups, academic spaces, work settings, and when participants had the opportunity to help others.

Within organizations or groups. *Where I have a role or responsibility* was an influential component of participant sense of belonging within organizations and formalized groups. As an orientation leader Davina helped plan the campus orientation which was "a three day event that was for over 6,000 students." Planning involved collecting "donations and getting everything ready from like 8am to midnight basically those three days." Davina reflected that her involvement "made me feel valued…that definitely made me feel like I belong here and definitely part of the University A orientation family." In spite of her lacking a sense of belonging to the greater campus because she felt different as a racially minoritized individual, Davina felt belonging with her orientation team because she made a contribution and was valued in that setting.

In another organizational setting, Karla felt a strong sense of belonging with her club sport team partially because of the leadership role she had within the team. She said, "I feel like I'm at home there. It's my club sport family." Karla has built a bond with her team over time through practicing and playing together and just having fun with one another. Importantly, they also share a "love" for their sport, which also speaks to the role of shared interests in sense of belonging. However now as a junior, Karla is in a position of leadership and has to show "how much I care about the team. And everybody, like the freshmen and the sophomores and even the upperclassmen look up to me." To Karla, having a sense of leadership in the team helped to strengthen her sense of belonging within the group even more.

Davina and Karla's sense of purpose within their organizations was in stark contrast with Christina's experience as part of the campus fashion magazine club. Christina reflected that joining the fashion magazine club her freshman year was sometimes "really uncomfortable" because the magazine club was another setting in which she felt different from her peers. She illuminated, "it was like kind of going back into the classroom and feeling different and it was exactly the same way. Most of the committee members are predominantly White students so I felt like I could never fit in." Though this was challenging, Christina continued going to meetings "just hoping I would be more involved" because of "the reputation that the magazine had and I really just wanted to be involved in my major." However she was rarely given the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way. Christina recalled, "most of the time I was there just sitting and hearing the updates and I was done." By her second semester she "just didn't see much change in like I felt like I wasn't really contributing anything for the magazine.

So I decided to step out half semester." The lack of opportunities to contribute did not only affect Christina. She explained, "in my observation if you don't have a directors position you don't do much. It just depends on the committee you're on…I think it was just part of the organization that they need to work on that."

Juan's experience in the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) showed that having to take on too much responsibility could also negatively impinge on sense of belonging. Midway through Juan's second semester, he began looking for a group of friends he could connect with and that shared similar backgrounds as he did. However after joining MASO Juan thought, "the club was super disorganized." Structurally, MASO struggled with dividing tasks equally among the members. Juan felt that he "had too much responsibility without having an official title." He explained that the president of MASO "just gave people stuff to do and nobody ever did it…I essentially ended up doing a vast majority of the stuff for that program and stuff so I didn't like that." After a year, Juan decided to leave the group.

Within academic spaces. Having a role or responsibility also came into play in participant sense of belonging within academic spaces. For example, Delta explained that did not feel a sense of belonging within the university as a whole in the first year he was at University A. He noted that in times where he was "the only minority or the only Mexican" in a class it caused him to "feel out of place." Delta "used to walk around campus questioning 'What am I doing here? Am I good enough to go to a university? Am I going to succeed? Am I going to make it or am I going to completely fail?'" He later was told by his brothers that he may have been experiencing the imposter syndrome. Understanding where those feelings were stemming from, as well as developing a sense

of community within his fraternity, helped Delta to recognize and embrace his role as a college student at University A. Now, instead of focusing on being different Delta generally tried not to think about that because "at the end of the day, I'm there to learn and not really to question if I'm supposed to be there or not…the main reason we go to college is to get that degree." To navigate feeling different in class, Delta

> always tend[s] to sit towards the front…making sure I pay attention and not get distracted by other individuals in that classroom…by me sitting mostly at the front, everyone behind me I don't want to say ignore, but they're not within my line of vision. So it doesn't really affect if I belong or not.

Lori's need to have a role in a given space to feel comfortable was reflected in places she did not belong. In fact, all of the places Lori identified that she did not feel a sense of belonging in on campus were places that she did not have a purpose within or an understanding of how things worked within that space. For instance there was a physics building on campus that her scholarship program met in for their bi-weekly meetings. When she went into the building she felt "just out of my element like why am I even here?" She explained that while walking by the lab hall she often saw

> people in their White coats and glasses on and stuff like that…they look so smart and they look like [they know] what they're doing…and I'm walking by and I'm just like, I'm just going to my seminar. But I would not be in that building if it was not for this seminar we have in there.

It was intimidating for Lori to be in an environment where she did not know what was happening or felt that she did not have something to contribute. Lori's sentiments

about the physics building were not exclusively felt in that space; she felt uncomfortable in any building that she was not familiar with or had a purpose within. She expressed,

> I mean I'm sure there's a few more buildings like that. Like the architecture building far off campus…I wouldn't feel like I belonged there just because I have no idea what you're doing, I don't know what all of this is…You should know what's going on if you're going to be in that building.

Karla echoed Lori's lack of belonging in academic buildings where she did not have a role. When she considered places on campus she did not feel a sense of belonging in, she replied "in different colleges they have different buildings. For example in architecture hall, that's where all the architecture majors – I don't think, like I've been there before to see different expositions, but I don't think that's my home. Even though it's still on campus." Clearly for Karla, having a major associated with a particular building was an important way she felt connected to or that she belonged within the particular space.

Karla's rationale for belonging in different buildings was the foundation of why Delta identified the Mechanical Engineering Building as a place he felt a sense of belonging. He explained that because he is a mechanical engineering student, "that is my building." Being a major in engineering helped him to develop a sense of belonging in the Mechanical Engineering Building and to feel comfortable often using one of the computer labs in the building. Delta's major played an important role in his sene of belonging in that space because he never even had "an official class there"—only "a couple labs in that building."

Within work settings. Participants also reflected on ways having a role or responsibility influenced their sense of belonging in work settings. As previously mentioned, having a role or purpose was a particularly salient connection to Lori's sense of belonging. For instance Lori has only been working in her job as a welcome desk worker for residential halls less than a semester, but it became a space where she felt a sense of belonging. Her sense of belonging primarily stemmed from having a sort of "authority" in her position, which gave her a sense of purpose. She described, "I feel like the person [students] go to, so I have a little higher power – I don't know how to explain it, but authority I guess. So that gives me a sense of belonging. So I feel like I do belong at that desk." Lori's belonging took time to develop. When she was just starting and learning the ropes she did not quite feel comfortable, but the more time she spent there interacting with residents the more she felt at ease.

Likewise, Juan worked for a lab on campus and was tasked to visit campus managed wetlands as part of his job. He described, "I actually have to drive out there sometimes like three hours away to these wetlands and collect water samples, do equipment maintenance, wetland maintenance." To Juan, being in the field doing work gave him a sense of belonging because "I like being outside and seeing the location first-hand and knowing that I collected the samples when I run them on the machines in the lab." Doing hands on work helped him to feel "like I contributed to the project. I contribute to the literature and contribute to the work being done in the lab." Making a contribution caused Juan to feel like a valued part of the project and positively affected his sense of belonging.

Romeo also felt a sense of belonging at his work. He has only been working there for about a month, but already felt like part of the group. He did not "want to say" he liked his co-workers, but they got along and shared the mentality – "if we want to get done and out of here on time we got to do this." Romeo's role in his work was an important part of his belonging. He felt important and that his presence mattered because if he is not there, "the work doesn't get done."

In contrast, Nine's experience at her work was an example of how, despite having a role in a given setting, feeling devalued because of her Latinx identity could diminish her sense of belonging. Nine started working in an office on campus this semester. Though the office receptionist was originally "really nice," Nine thought that she was "not that culturally aware of things and she kind of goes about things the wrong way." Nine first noticed her behavior "when I worked with my friend that wore a hijab, she wouldn't treat her very well." She noticed that when they all "talked together, she would only be looking at me." Nine somewhat brushed this off and reasoned, "maybe I'm overthinking stuff or being too aware." However later Nine spoke Spanish to one of her friend's parents in front of her and "she was like 'wow I didn't know you spoke Spanish.'" Nine thought that "ever since then…she's treated me a little different" and has also displayed racial microaggressions towards Nine. The receptionist was writing emails to faculty members and became "really frustrated" when she came across "an instructor who, I assume is Hispanic because she had two Hispanic sounding last names." Nine reflected, "she was like 'oh my gosh…there's two last names here I don't know what to do.' She was just kind of being very angry about it and she asked me…'why do you guys have two last names?'" Nine told her to just use both and explained why, at least in

Mexico, it was common for people to have two last names. After that, Nine noticed other negative ways that she is treated by the receptionist. For example, when Nine asked her questions, she "gives me a blunt answer or she's like (sighs) and answers my question…It just bothers me." Nine talked to a co-worker about it and she said that she experienced the same things from the receptionist. Nine noted that her workplace

> just gets uncomfortable for me sometimes so that is honestly kind of one of the first times that has ever happened to me. Because I never really get any microaggressions toward me because I'm light skinned so that never really happens to me.

The way the office secretary treated Nine affected her sense of belonging in her office because now, she does not like going to work. The receptionist was out of the office for a week and Nine "enjoyed when she was not there just because those comments weren't there."

When helping others. In addition to having a role in a given setting, many participants' sense of belonging was also boosted by assuming roles in which they had the opportunity to help others. One example of how having a role helping others shaped sense of belonging was Hector's experience at the University A Latinx Leadership Event. While many students attended the event during their first year and found it useful in establishing a community at University A, Hector was unable to go his freshman year so he went during his sophomore year. Naturally one important part of the experience for Hector was being able to "come together, get to know one another and feel comfortable in knowing other Latinos." However, by that point, Hector had already established connections with several communities on campus. Hector's pre-established connections

helps to explain why, perhaps even more importantly to Hector, he was able to connect with freshmen and offer "them a heads up to how college is like, what to expect, and what to be prepared for." Being able to pay forward the lessons he learned in college was an important part of his experience and his belonging in that space.

Paloma similarly felt a sense of belonging at the University A Latinx Leadership Event, but more for her direct role in serving on the programming committee her sophomore year. Just as in Hector's case, being "surrounded by people that share the same culture or similar culture as you and speak the same language as you" was also an important component. However when Paloma attended the event her freshman year she felt "kind of awkward" because she did not know anyone. In the end she had "an awesome experience," but being on the programming committee gave her a greater sense of purpose and belonging because

> we were in charge of leading it so I felt a lot more comfortable just putting myself out there because I was like I already went through this, I know what to expect, I know how it is, and it's basically a space for them and not for me.

Paloma thought that she helped to make a difference. One student, for instance, told her "this retreat has motivated me and helped me realize why I'm here and helped me find a community that supports me." To Paloma, helping others was what her involvement was all about—"it's just like helping them feel more comfortable at the university and helping them feel more like they belong is really important to me."

Where I Share Interests or Values with Others: Campus and External Microsystems

> *[I work for] a non-profit law firm that [is devoted] to do systemic change to the state for the investment for the advancement of child welfare, economic justice, immigration…And just that whole immigration aspect I just enjoy being in that area like, 'Oh my gosh they're fighting for justice for immigration!* (Luis)

Luis was completing an internship at a law office and felt a sense of belonging in that space primarily because the work contributes to a cause that he was committed to. His quote illustratd the value he ascribed to fighting for social justice and helping others—a value that Luis shared with the members of the law firm he worked for. Being around others working on issues that Luis thought was important was empowering and contributed to his sense of belonging in that space. Similarly, in terms of *where I share interests or values with others*, participants often identified particular places or groups in which sharing values or interests with those in the setting influenced their sense of belonging. Given the connection to human characteristics, this was another reflection of Strange and Banning's (2015) human aggregate environment. This section describes examples of ways shared interests and values affected participant sense of belonging.

Sharing interests. Sharing interests with others in a given setting offered participants a way to connect with those individuals and ultimately boosted their sense of belonging within that space. The role of sharing interests in sense of belonging came to light in Juan's experience at University A. When Juan first started at University A he lacked a general sense of belonging, but he felt it when he played intramural sports along with his "two White roommates." Juan expressed that in those settings he felt like he

belonged, “because it was a group of people that I shared a common interest with.” Unfortunately, that sense of belonging did not go beyond that space, but it was clearly an important experience to Juan as he has continued to play intramurals with those individuals throughout college.

Participant01 felt a sense of belonging in a particular building on campus where she “had a lot of courses” focused on issues she was really interested in. Her connection to the building was definitely not through the physical attributes of the space. In fact she described it as “not very welcoming.” The building always smelled like chlorine because it had a pool and there were “not many windows.” There was a particular room in the building she felt a particular connection to, which she thought was “kind of weird because it’s in the basement.” However what was important to her were the “courses I’ve taken…I’ve really learned a lot from those courses.” For instance she took “a family violence class” where she “learned more about child abuse and intimate partner violence.” The course focus was something that she felt like she “should know and I feel everybody should know – so it was kind of just that awareness of everything.”

As mentioned in Karla’s story, she was very passionate about marching band and as part of that she reflected, “I really feel like University B Stadium is my home.” Her sense of belonging within that space began with her being there with her “band family,” which also spoke to the importance of being valued and cared for. Her sense of belonging was even further amplified by being among crowds of people all gathered for one purpose. Rather than feeling intimidated, Karla was excited by large crowds while she played at the games. She clarified, “maybe if I was the only one performing I would be more nervous. I think my first time my freshman year I was kind of nervous. But then it

was the experience being there was just really cool." Karla emphasized that the community is "so passionate about [University B] football." She described, "when you get out there everybody's just cheering." Being able to be part of the school's excitement and spirit for the team, Karla thought "it's nice to have that connection with so many people that like something."

Sharing values. Another important component of the characteristic of belonging, *where I share interests or values with others*, was shared values in a particular place. As previously described, Luis's shared values with the individuals in his workspace were an important part of his sense of belonging in that space. However participants also identified places in which they lacked a sense of belonging because they did not share values or interests with those in a given setting. For instance Karla reasoned that "if I wanted to go to a church that believes different ideas than what I believe in, I wouldn't feel as comfortable and I guess as welcomed as I would be in other churches." While this was a hypothetical example, Nine's experience on campus in the free speech zone at University A negatively affected her sense of belonging in that area. While the area usually consisted of people "handing out flyers, getting people to vote," Nine viewed it as "a place I don't feel comfortable because you literally always get stopped." Being stopped by speakers would not be problematic, but the type of speakers that often went to that area were very offensive and espoused values that did not align with Nine's. Nine described,

> there's these two people who are always come in the fall and they supposedly are preachers or talking about religion and all that stuff, but they say like the most racist, xenophobic, misogynistic things. And they're yelling at people and there's

> people who gather around and they're yelling back at them…it's like not comfortable.

Another example is "this one guy who's a preacher who like would call girls walking by sluts and whores. He would be like oh look at how she's dressed type of thing." Nine explained that students have "complained and the police is usually there like supervising everything because people accuse him of harassment. But police can't do anything unless he directly and specifically calls that one person something." A couple weeks ago people had posters and tents up on either side of the sidewalk and Nine had to walk through "and that was just super uncomfortable…I had to walk right next to the guy preaching." She was worried that he would stop her and say something. Luckily he did not, but whenever possible, Nine tries to take a different route through campus.

Karla also reflected on a particularly uncomfortable experience she encountered in the free speech zone at University B. She reflected that a man was standing in the area "holding a stick and it had a bloody tampon. And it was just really weird. He was just saying how women are the devil's work or something like that." Karla continued to explain that she was "walking with my best friend who is Muslim, so she wears a hijab. And he said something about Muslims being terrorists." Karla explained that her friend

> doesn't ignore things. So she just had a big argument with him, which is pretty funny and great because she was totally like telling him off in a nice way. And she also is very educated so she knew what she was talking about.

Though the event was offensive, it did not seem to influence Karla's sense of belonging because she felt the student community at University B shared her values rather than agreeing with the man. Karla described that students were "cheering her on" and

questioning "why did he say these things?" Karla asserted that everyone thought "he sounded very ridiculous." Karla thought that these types of situations could be "very uncomfortable," but have become something that students "have to deal with."

One example of places where participants did not share values or interests with individuals in a setting that also overlapped with participants' perceptions of the extent that their culture was valued on campus were Trump rallies. Trump rallies served as othering experiences that caused participants to feel marginalized as racially minoritized individuals on campus and negatively affected their sense of belonging. Participants' reflections on these rallies was another indication of the role of the chronosystem in sense of belonging. Participants believed that Donald Trump devalued their culture, and as a result, lacked a sense of belonging in Trump rallies because they did not share values with rally participants. Hector for one did not "feel right" with the "negative" things that came up at Trump rallies. He explained that following the election, "things got dark. Of course people, mostly White students were expressing themselves too negatively…I just step myself away from that." Similarly Fernando said that although he could not think of particular places he would not go, there were certain people or crowds that he would rather not be around, which included people in Trump rallies. He explained,

> there was a Trump rally just yesterday, not on campus but it was right off a corner of campus where it gets really busy…on social media there was many people of Color that were warning all the other students, there's this going on if you want to avoid it make sure you take an alternate route.

Fernando asserted that "people know what happens at those type of events so it's better just to avoid things." He could not think of other types of groups that would make him

feel uncomfortable reflecting, “I feel like it’s more political things that have been happening that have made me feel uncomfortable on campus and then the people that get tied into it, that makes you view them differently as well.”

In addition to Trump rallies, even having Trump supporters attend anti-Trump rallies disturbed some participants because these individuals served as reminders of Trump’s views of racially minoritized individuals, which caused participants to feel marginalized. Paloma for one explained that she attended one of the anti-Trump rallies and stood near the back with some of her friends. They noticed that there were “a bunch of students that were all White and all male. And they were all like oh yeah we’re building our own wall over here and repping Trump stuff.” Paloma further added that

> one of them was somebody I graduated with in high school. And I didn’t say anything to him, I didn’t wave at him, I just looked at him and we made eye contact and then after that he left. And I’m just like I hope you know, me as a woman, me as a Mexican American, like my life has been affected and will change you know?

Overall Paloma knew that most of the students at University A were not Trump supporters, or at least she tried to believe that. However for the ones that were she

> just kind of like low-key judge them. I’m not a really judgmental person but for that I’m kind of like wow…I don’t want to think of them as people who are racists and stuff like that, but at the same time…your vote supports someone who is racist and that’s something I just can’t respect.

Here again was a prime example of how the chronosystem played a role in participant experiences and in this case affected how they perceived members of the campus community.

Characteristics of Belonging: LGLOs

The previous sections focused on participant sense of belonging in microsystems individuals encountered on campus and in life in general to better understand how Latinx college students develop a sense of belonging. Given the significance of subcultures in the experiences of racially minoritized students and Latinxs in particular as previously described in the literature, exploring microsystems encountered by participants through participation in LGLOs helped to shed light on the role of these organizations in Latinx student sense of belonging.

Membership in a particular subculture of the university, LGLOs, exposed participants to subcontexts or microsystems associated with the LGLOs; the following sections will describe ways that the characteristics of belonging manifested in these microsystems. In addition, as an effect of their involvement in a LGLO, participants were also members of the greater Greek community at University A and B. Therefore these sections will also describe ways that the characteristics came to light in participants' experiences in microsystems they encountered as a result of their membership in the greater Greek community as applicable.

Notably, manifestations of the characteristic *where people look like me* were intrinsically connected to *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued* within microsystems encountered through the LGLO, therefore these characteristics were combined into one section. All of the participants were drawn to their fraternity or

sorority because the membership was primarily comprised of Latinx members or *where people look like me*. The primary reason seeing other Latinxs was important to participants was because they could connect to one another based on shared culture, which reaffirmed that their culture was recognized and valued. Attempting to parse out examples of how these characteristics came to light individually through membership in the LGLO detracted from a full discussion of participant experiences. Therefore the following section will instead discuss the two characteristics together in terms of their interconnections and role in participant experiences.

Where People Look Like Me and Where My Racial Identity and Culture is Recognized and Valued: LGLOs and the Greek Community

> *Our culture is very similar. We're mainly, more of us are from Mexico or have Mexican background, so we can all just relate to everything, which is not something I would be able to do with my other friends…we all just enjoy the same things, food…We like to listen to the same type of like music, not all the music, just like I guess like Hispanic music like Salsa and Bachata…there's these things called Latin Nights where they just play Latin music and we just like to dance and we all enjoy it. Which is not something I would do with my other friends just because they don't know how to dance or they don't understand the words because it's in Spanish*. (Karla)

As evident in Karla's quote, culture was a critical component of participant sense of belonging in their LGLO. In terms of the characteristics of belonging, membership in LGLOs was intrinsically connected to the characteristics of belonging, *where people look like me* and *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued*. All of the

participants' decisions to join their fraternity or sorority were grounded in the fact that the organizations were founded to serve the Latinx community and were therefore primarily comprised of Latinx members. However, many of the participants also emphasized that their organizations were inclusive of students from all backgrounds. Davina for example explained, "we like to say that we're Latin by tradition not by definition. So we don't just accept Latinas. We accept anyone that basically follows [our] principles." Similarly Karla asserted that although one of the goals of Pi Delta was to support the Latinx community, that did not mean that individuals that were not Latina could not join. Karla clarified that recruiting Latinx members was, "our main priority, but not just their only priority, we try to help everybody out. But because we are a Latina based, we want to help out Latinas more."

Regardless of the extent that the membership included individuals from other racial or ethnic backgrounds, the Latinx culture played an important part in participants' membership and sense of belonging within the organizations. Being in a group primarily comprised of other Latinxs was a direct way participants were able to be in a place *where people look like me*. Accordingly, because they shared culture with other members of the LGLOs they could easily establish connections with one another through elements of their culture. The foundation of the organizations as being rooted in serving the Latinx community through initiatives such as service and cultural events further ensured that the organizations also provided places *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued*.

Membership in the LGLOs tied the participants to membership in the larger Greek community. However, it was clear that the participants all saw traditional Greek

organizations as being very different from MGC organizations and often felt that their racial or cultural identities were not represented or even valued in settings they encountered with the traditional organizations. The following sections will describe participants' experiences in regard to the combined characteristics of *where people look like me* and *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued* through microsystems experienced through the LGLOs as well as the greater Greek community.

Sharing culture within the LGLO. Participants' stories pointed to a number of ways they were able to share their culture within the LGLO. Participant01 for instance came into University B questioning, "Where are the Latinos?" She wanted to join a Latinx based organization as opposed to other Greek organizations because "I am very culturally inclined so I like talking about specific food or like our family situation so it's kind of like I wanted to be part of our Latino community on campus." Participant01 further explained that she "could never see myself going into like other organizations because I feel like I wouldn't fit in. Like I couldn't fully be myself." Having the ability to relate to others and share her culture increased her sense of belonging and ability to be herself.

Similarly, Karla was drawn to Pi Delta because "it was really nice having a group of Latinas who share the same culture as I do." Karla wanted to be part of an organization that connected her with other Latinxs because growing up in the U.S., she was "always friends with the non-Hispanics." As discussed in Karla's story, when it came to the other Latinxs in her school she always "felt like we were very different even though we were Hispanic." In college she wanted to pursue the opportunity to connect with others that shared a cultural background with her. After meeting the members of Pi Delta, she saw

that "they were Hispanics like me that cared about their education and their future. So I wanted to be involved in that." It was evident that the characteristic of belonging, *where I share interests or values with others*, was also an important part of Karla's belonging.

Lori chose to join a Latinx sorority rather than a traditional sorority because the members of traditional organizations "were all White. So it was like, how can I talk about my mom's papusas with you if you don't even know?" For Lori, being part of a Latinx Greek organization was different than being part of a traditional Greek organization because it was group she could actually relate to and share culture with. She explained that she would not feel comfortable bringing her mom to a traditional organization because they would judge her and her mom for being different.

> So me being Latina and having a Latina family, when they [traditionals] do their little mom and dad days or something, I can't bring my mom over there…I would not feel comfortable… Because she doesn't know English and she doesn't, you know she doesn't even know what Greek is…She's very Hispanic and I feel like they would judge her. I could not have that, them judging my mom or you know, not treat her the same because of who she is.

Lori's perception of how she and her mom would be treated by a traditional organization was much different than her place in Pi Delta where, "I feel like I actually belong." Lori did not feel as though she had to hide who she was around her sisters. Her mom had met a few of them already because they were from her hometown, but Lori would feel comfortable introducing all of her sisters to her mom because "we could bond, like you know because we're Latinas we know how it is."

Shared experiences with members of the LGLO as Latinxs also played an important role in Delta's experience. Delta struggled to belong at University A during his first couple of weeks after transferring. However after meeting the members of Omega Iota, "I saw a group of individuals where we all shared a common background, were all facing or had faced the same struggles, and we were all aiming to do something more." Delta even "met another guy who was actually from my same home state in Mexico, his hometown is about an hour from my hometown in Mexico. That was really neat just seeing more people like me." That was the point when Delta decided to join the fraternity and

> after that it just took off for me. I really didn't face the same struggles I was facing my first two weeks. Sure I would get homesick every now and then, but nowhere to the same extreme as in my first two weeks.

Finding a community where he saw aspects of himself reflected in the membership helped Delta to also find a sense of belonging.

Part of Omi's belonging in her sorority was about sharing beliefs, which ultimately came down to shared culture. Omi's sisters understood her cultural background and have experienced it themselves, whereas she did not believe traditional sorority members could relate. She explained,

> If I were to join a traditional [sorority] they really would not understand my culture, really my beliefs…like my Mexican beliefs compared to theirs. They would not understand how important certain things are for me. They would just be like that's like nothing, but deep down for us it's something. And I feel like these girls actually understand.

One specific thing that Omi could connect with Latinxs that White people would not understand was racism. Notably she was unsure if she should say "White people" or "Caucasians" and did not want to be offensive. Regardless she expressed, "I just don't think they understand what racism really is. Just because, they have never really gone through it."

For Christina, being in a group of Latinxs that also advocated for social justice issues not only increased her awareness of racial issues, but also strengthened her confidence in her identity as a Latina—something that "wasn't the case before I got here." She described that,

> I guess during high school I never really paid much attention to racism and all that stuff. I never—it's not that I wasn't proud of being Latina, but I never showed that pride I never cared to get informed, it was kind of like a whatever thing to me. But when I got here things changed, my perspective on things changed a whole lot. And I take immense pride in being who I am.

This pride was exemplified in the way Christina talked about speaking Spanish on campus. She has seen people on campus look at others speaking Spanish strangely, however this does not deter her from speaking Spanish on campus or sometimes with her sisters. In fact,

> I think it makes me more prideful in doing it. Most of the time I don't do it because I call my parents later at night. But I don't hold back from it.

Sharing culture with the campus community. There were also ways that, through their organizations, participants were able to share their culture with the campus community. For participants, sharing their culture affirmed that their cultural identities

were recognized on campus and valued within the LGLO, which positively influenced their sense of belonging to the organization and often served as a bridge to enhance their belonging at the institutional level. As described in chapter four, there were two primary forms of these cultural events—those that celebrated and shared elements of Latinx culture and those that were focused on bringing social justice issues faced by the Latinx community to light. All of the participants reflected on the positive role these events played in their overall college experience. Nine explained the importance of these events,

> we do a lot of events to educate other Latinos or educate people [about] a certain section of the Latino community. So that's something we really focus on. So I think that's something that's different because our mission is to continue to educate and be a voice for other Latinos. So in doing these events we are being a voice.

Juan enjoyed attending culturally focused events and thought they were "kind of nice, you know, you're with friends, with people you're comfortable with at the same time." These types of events were important to Juan's college experience, particularly by connecting him to other members of the Latinx community. He asserted "I didn't know the community existed on campus so I think they're great." Juan added, these events were also "the reason why I got involved with the fraternity in general." Juan thought that having cultural events was certainly a positive thing and "the university just allowing us to do events like that, you know, adds to a sense of belonging." For Juan, the influence of these events not only positively affected his sense of belonging in his fraternity, but also somewhat translated to the University.

Supporting Latinx communities. There were also important opportunities participants had to give back to their communities through service with the LGLOs, which also positively impressed on their sense of belonging. Romeo described these events in terms of being reflective of the "values and these principles that we follow." He explained, "we try to make our best to carry an impact with everything we do and the events we hold. So somebody somewhere can benefit or we can help out a family in need, just anything we can do to make a difference in the community." By community, Romeo meant that they "try to focus on the Latino community within the student body," but they also do things for communities beyond that scope.

Giving back to the Latinx community was also reflected in Fernando's description of several service initiatives Nu Sigma engaged in, which played an important role in terms of his sense of belonging in the fraternity. For instance, the fraternity members partnered in a Latinx youth mentoring initiative in conjunction with an outreach program sponsored by University A. As mentioned in chapter four, Nu Sigma also started a Latinx Family Day on campus hosted in Spanish that brought high school students and parents to the university to discuss becoming a student at University A. Fernando asserted that the reason why they host the event in Spanish is for the parents

> Because a lot of times these students, sometimes they don't get support from their parents just for the fact that their parents don't see any benefits of going through higher education… So with that we try to help them to grasp the idea of the importance of college…So we make it kind of for the parents and the students just so that we can get the parents to understand and can give that support to their

children so that way when they become students, they don't have a lack of support.

Another example of LGLO service that benefitted the Latinx community was the conference for young Latinas hosted by Pi Delta. Karla described that during the event, they "do different workshops…building skills and talking to them about college and just talking about the many opportunities they have and to promote continuing education. I guess also just showing them they have support from others." Having the opportunity to work with these individuals was important to Karla and she was "super excited" to do so. Karla thought that in being a role model, "I feel like you can do so much impact in like a lot of people's lives." Karla particularly enjoyed sharing her experiences "because I'm in the STEM field. I also like to promote the sciences and technology and mathematics." Having these opportunities was important to the participants and, as a result, made them feel more connected to their LGLO and enhanced their sense of belonging.

Racial disparities within the Greek community. Membership in the LGLOs meant that the participants were also members of the greater Greek community within their university. Participants' reflections shed light on the stark contrast in how positively the characteristics *where people look like me* and *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued* manifested within the LGLOs and the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) and how negatively these characteristics played a role in their sense of belonging within the greater Greek community. Participants' lack of sense of belonging within the Greek community as a whole primarily stemmed from racial disparities they recognized between the traditional Greek organizations and the LGLOs. In light of these disparities, there were several examples of ways microsystems in the Greek community

played a role in participant experiences and influenced their sense of belonging within Greek Life. For instance, the Greek housing area on campus was an area identified by about half of the participants as a place they did not feel a sense of belonging. Participant lack of belonging in the Greek housing area was primarily a result of the human aggregate environment, though the physical environment also played a lesser role. In regard to the human aggregate, the participants largely recognized these organizations as predominantly White and not a place where they would belong. Delta said the Greek housing area "feels like an environment that you're not supposed to be in. Just because like I said the majority of the population in that area is different than you, you're a foreigner in that area."

Luis saw traditional organizations as being completely different than his fraternity in terms of "how they operate, their culture, everything is just different." Hector thought there was some degree of "discrimination" among the councils in the Greek community—"like White sororities and White fraternities distancing away multicultural fraternities." Hector described this as "some sort of competition between our members in the organizations."

The perceptions the participants had of the Greek organizations and how the members would treat outsiders negatively shaped the extent they felt comfortable in those spaces. Fernando said if he were invited to one of the traditional organizations' events or house,

> I would be willing to go, that's for sure, but then it's always stuck in the back of my head like I know there's going to be some of these people that actually speak

> negatively about me and people that look like me. But they just do it behind my back.

Ultimately he did not think his willingness to go would matter because "either way it's not like they would ever invite our organizations."

Stemming from being in a place where he did not see others that looked like himself, Delta also lacked a sense of belonging in the Greek Life Office. He has been there before and just "feel[s] odd." The "main reason" he feels that way is because "the majority of the personnel that are there are obviously White." The second reason Delta asserted was that "most of the student organizations that utilize that area are members from the IFC and CPC fraternal organizations. It goes back to skin color you know? It really shouldn't go to that, but I feel out of place." Delta explained that he does not completely avoid going to the office, but "I don't really stop in there…I only go if I need to go there. If not, I don't pass that area." His sense of discomfort in feeling different was compounded by an experience with a staff member where he felt devalued as a member of MGC, which also underscored the significance of the characteristic *where I am valued and cared for*.

In addition to not seeing their racial or ethnic identities reflected in the greater Greek community, there were also instances when participants' racial or cultural identity was not valued within the larger Greek community. For Delta, this stemmed from experiences he had first-hand with members of traditional organizations, for Luis and Omi these perceptions were based on the experiences of others. Delta thought that in terms of "other White sororities and fraternities, it feels that we're the odd ones out, it feels that we're not included." One particular experience that impressed on his perception was when

his organization was somehow involved in Greek Week—despite the fact that none of his brothers ever indicated that they signed up the organization for the event. Omega Iota was grouped together with one other Latinx sorority and several other traditional organizations. One of the members of Omega Iota received an email inviting them to a football watch party at one of the traditional fraternity's houses. The email requested interested organizations to send them a count of who would be attending. Delta admitted that the member of Omega Iota "that received that email didn't reply back." However he and one of his brothers decided to attend. They walked across campus despite the fact there was "snow on the ground, it was cold." When they knocked on the door one of the fraternity members answered and "asked who we were…We informed him we were from Omega Iota and were there due to an email we received. Yet, they had no idea who we were." Even though "we weren't even invited to walk in," Delta and his brother stepped into the entryway because "it was cold." However they just "stood there as we were being supervised." Delta described that they were having the event and in "the other room you could see the TV, you could see people eating," but they were not even asked if they would like a drink. The member that answered the door finally told them "we'll figure out what's going on and get back to you guys, let me get your number." After they gave him their numbers they left and Delta's brother was "extremely angry." After they "followed up with the Latina organization" and discovered that "two of their sisters went, but they ran into the same problem…so they left." Delta and his brother refused to participate in the "team" after the incident.

Delta noted that the "fraternity's president never reached out to apologize, never said anything regarding what had happened that night on behalf of his members." Much

later during an all presidents meeting, they planned to discuss the incident within a topic on diversity and inclusion. However, the members "changed the subject last minute" and were going to skip the discussion. Delta questioned the change in topic at the beginning of the meeting "and if it had not been for an NPHC organization, who backed up my question, the discussion on diversity and inclusion would have never started." The NPHC member

> was upset at the fact that during the same time as Greek Week, one of his members, who was African American, was called the 'N word' on his way back to campus coming back from supporting one of the White Greek lettered organizations events.

After that, Delta explained what happened to them during Greek week and the president of the fraternity responsible tried to defend his members' actions by saying

> they had just gotten off probation and needed to be really careful on who they let into the house. Because they did not want drunk people going into their house and doing something stupid and getting them in trouble more. That made no sense to me since the day was a Sunday, we were sober, we were invited.

Following the meeting, "the director of Greek [Life] said he was going to work on facilitating with multicultural student affairs, a workshop or lecture that was specifically going to talk about diversity and inclusion." However Delta noted the incident occurred "over a year ago so nothing ever really happened. People just like to talk about it, not too often follow up." Ever since Delta's negative experience he has "had a bad taste in my mouth" for traditional organizations.

Luis explained there was one incident that happened his freshman or sophomore year that negatively affected his perception of traditional Greek organizations as racially and culturally inclusive. One of the senators in the University student government "was from a White fraternity and he said some racist things during the meeting and even used the N word…he used it intentionally." His use of a racial slur resulted in "a lot of media coverage…And that sparked a huge out lash among the whole university of why is he using the N word?" The student was removed as a senator and the "Chancellor started a whole campaign– pretty much a stance against racism on campus of like we're not going to have those things." However the Chancellor's response did not completely put Luis's mind at ease about the incident because beyond the student being removed from his position, he "didn't see any signs of improvement immediately." Luis felt that the response was in the "heat of the moment," but did not have much follow through. He thought it would have been better if the University had "events about race or I don't know just understanding what minority students face and how they're different than the rest of the student population…that would just extend beyond a simple campaign or simple little speech."

Omi also lacked a sense of belonging in the Greek housing area. She explained this was "just because most of the fraternities are White based…I feel they would maybe treat us very differently…because we're Hispanic and most traditionals don't have Hispanic guys in there so they really don't know much about our culture and what to say." Omi was concerned that "guys" in particular, in an effort to "be funny" may say offensive things. Omi never experienced any racially charged or discriminatory situations on campus first-hand and she has not personally had a bad experience with Greek

housing on campus. However hearing a story about another student's experience influenced the way she felt about the traditional Greek community. She explained that a Black football player "went to a fraternity house and they were telling him like 'no Black guys can't come in here' and were just saying racist remarks to him." Hearing his story was significant to Omi because "football is big here, he's a starter and everything." She reasoned,

> if that's how they treated a student athlete man I think they would treat me worse than that since I'm just a student, not an athlete. So yeah just hearing him say that made me think yeah I don't think I can get near those places.

In terms of the physical environment, the houses alone did not carry any significance in and of themselves, but they served as physical representations of those organizations, thus participants associated those spaces with places they did not belong.

Where I Am Valued and Cared For: LGLOs and the Greek Community

> *[Brotherhood] means having each others' backs. So taking a bullet for one another, literally and in the sense of – how did you say it, sarcastically or something? So I feel like brotherhood means you're accepted no matter what…we may fight today, but we'll make up tomorrow. We may disagree on an issue, but we'll work through it. You're accepted here and so in your time in need I'm here to help you and support you…if you ever need someone to talk to, I'm here for you. If you're ever in trouble, if you ever have any issues in your personal life and you need someone. I feel like that's my definition of brotherhood, just being there for that person in their best moments and their worst*. (Romeo)

An underlying and critical aspect of Romeo's description of brotherhood was being part of a community where he felt valued and cared for. There were several ways that participants discussed the role of feeling valued in relation to their sense of belonging in their LGLO and within the Greek community. Importantly, participants' sense of feeling valued and cared for was a reflection of whether they mattered and had a place within the organization or community. The following sections discuss participants experiences with feeling valued in relation to their LGLO and the greater Greek community.

Sisterhood/brotherhood. An essential part of the organizations that provided the foundation for the characteristic of belonging, *where I am valued and cared for*, were described in the LGLO section of Chapter Four through the concepts of brotherhood/sisterhood, being part of an interconnected network across the country, and the notion of membership for life. These three concepts also influenced the organizational culture, which the participants described as a culture of care and support. This culture of care and support contributed to participants' overall sense of feeling valued and cared for within the organization and manifested in a number of settings with the members of the fraternity or sorority such as chapter meetings and spaces frequented by members of the organization.

All of the participants reflected on the unique bonds they experienced through their sisterhood or brotherhood and its contribution to their sense of belonging within the organization. Many of these individuals noted that was one of the essential aspects of the organization that distinguished it from other types of groups, including other ethnic based organizations. Christina emphasized this distinction when she stated that in terms of

sisterhood and brotherhood, “you couldn’t really find that in let’s say a Mexican American Student Organization or something like that.”

The bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood were unique to Greek organizations and played an important role in why participants felt such a strong sense of belonging within their LGLO. The significance of sisterhood was reflected, for instance, in Paloma’s description of the term. To her, it meant “family” and she believed “my sisters are part of my family that I have formed here on campus.” Paloma thought that her sisterhood was “somewhere where you can be safe, somewhere where you can be yourself around, somewhere where you’re always supported, somewhere you’re always being watched out for.”

Romeo’s interpretation of brotherhood also illuminated the role of feeling cared for. While he thought that everyone would define brotherhood differently, to Romeo

> it means having each others’ backs. So taking a bullet for one another, literally and in the sense of – how did you say it, sarcastically or something? So I feel like brotherhood means you’re accepted no matter what…we may fight today, but we’ll make up tomorrow. We may disagree on an issue, but we’ll work through it. You’re accepted here and so in your time in need I’m here to help you and support you…just being there for that person in their best moments and their worst.

Romeo noted that brotherhood was different than friendship because “There’s some things I would do for a brother that I wouldn’t do for a friend…for a brother I feel like that’s where I’d go the extra mile.” Romeo was willing to support his brothers and had received support that was vital to his college experience himself. Romeo believed if he

had never joined Nu Sigma, “I don’t feel like I would still be in college, I feel like I would’ve dropped out by now.”

He further explained that he would not have succeeded because “they kind of pointed me in the right direction” and

> gave me enough tools to get what I needed to get done. So if I needed homework help I would go to a member who had already taken the class and ask him if he had any past homework or quizzes or if he could possibly sit down with me and work through this problem. And so just having that mentorship I feel like really kept me in.

Having brothers that cared enough about his success to help him when he needed it positively reinforced Romeo’s sense of belonging.

The development of the bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood often began when participants met members of the organization and were shown that they were cared for and valued from the start. Omi met the members of Pi Delta her freshman year, but decided to wait a year before she joined because “personally, I wasn’t ready and I was in the process of changing majors.” Even though she did not immediately join, the members of Pi Delta showed they cared for her by maintaining connections with her even throughout her freshman year. She reflected, “all of them still talked to me, were asking me how I was doing, they never really said anything about me not joining them right away. They were like no it’s fine, just keep exploring.” The support Omi received from the Pi Delta sisters despite the fact that she did not immediately join was significant to Omi and positively influenced her sense of belonging and her decision to join.

Christina felt a sense of belonging within Kappa Beta from "the first time I met them" because they showed her that they actually cared about her. Christina reflected, "they asked my name, they asked where I was from. They made conversation, they made that personal connection and I didn't even know them." One particular member even sent her a text on her first day of school. The text showed Christina that these girls cared even after just meeting her and was particularly meaningful because Christina did not feel like other students on campus really made an effort to talk to her. She expressed, "ever since then it's just been this sense that this is my home away from home." Christina's sense of belonging was also present in the weekly Kappa Beta chapter meetings. She described, "I know that's a place I belong. I know I will always be welcome because it's with my sisters." In that space she felt like her opinions were valued and that "what I have to say matters…because everyone is a part of the sisterhood so everyone's voice matters."

Similarly when Davina first joined Kappa Beta, she felt a sense of belonging "right away." During middle school Davina hung out with "a group of friends but they weren't really a good group of friends…sometimes they really didn't treat me as a friend, they didn't value me." When she went to high school she stopped hanging out with them and made friends with another individual who "was really my only friend during high school." She was also part of the STEM Forward program, but she and Davina "drifted apart since college started." However when Davina met the sisters of Kappa Beta, she particularly bonded with one who "valued me a lot and she barely knew me. She made me feel really comfortable in my own skin." Davina became emotional when she said

> it was really just her that made me feel really comfortable and that I actually mattered. So I owe it a lot to her, but she made me feel comfortable in my own

skin, she knew that I was important and she reminded me pretty much every time that I saw her.

Davina did not "have an older sister, but I feel like she was the first one that actually took me kind of under her wing and looked out for me in a way and actually treated me like a person compared to my past friends." While she valued all of her sisters, knowing that this particular sister thought she mattered and showed that she was valued played a critical role in her sense of belonging.

Sisterhood and brotherhood was also reinforced through organizational initiatives such as planning and hosting events as well as through sisterhood and brotherhood events. Through these events, members of the organization had the opportunity to spend time with one another and connect outside of the more "business side" of the organizations. These events were often as simple as having a movie night as Lori described or to simply "go someplace and just hang out there, go get coffee" as Karla asserted. Juan explained that his brotherhood has recently "been so busy with schoolwork and with events, planning" that they have somewhat neglected their brotherhood events. To compensate for this neglect, he explained "for the past 2 weekends we actually just sat around and watched movies together and had potluck style dinners and invited people who were interested." As indicated by the participants, maintaining the bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood were important parts of these organizations.

Developing connections with members of other chapters and alumni further strengthened participants' sense of sisterhood and brotherhood, ultimately swaying the degree that participants felt valued and cared for, and as a result, a sense of belonging. Attending the Omega Iota national convention reinforced Hector's sense of belonging. He

explained that in terms of the fraternity, **"**founding fathers are the ones that founded the fraternity in general and then a founding brother is the one that founded the chapter." At the convention, Hector not only had the opportunity to meet two of his chapter's founding brothers, but he also met several of their founding fathers. At first his line brother was intimidated to approach them and Hector replied, "this is our fraternity and I want a picture." When they approached one of the founding fathers, he "was like hey what up? He took a picture with us…We had a good conversation." To Hector, being able to approach even one of the founders of the organization and to feel comfortable doing so was a boost to his belonging in the fraternity.

Feeling connected to alumni was an important part of several of the participants' belonging within the LGLO. For instance, being invited to one of the Pi Delta alumni's engagement showers reinforced Lori's sense of belonging. Lori "felt very honored to be invited." She believed her invitation was recognition of her efforts to get to know the alumni and that "they have really appreciated that of me." Lori thought that particularly being so new to the organization, "that's a great sense of belonging."

Manifestations of feeling valued and cared for. There were also examples of particular ways that feeling valued and cared for in the LGLO manifested in participant experiences and increased their sense of belonging in the organization. Romeo's previously described experience underscored the significance of a support system that cared about his success, which he had through his fraternity. Likewise in Delta's experience, his fraternity has "been a great support system…it's made the difference whether I floated or sank at the university level, I've definitely floated. In my first couple weeks I was definitely sinking, it's definitely kept me afloat since then."

Similarly, Luis emphasized that his brothers have been important to his experience, particularly last semester when he was "overwhelmed, when I was breaking down, when I was going through my personal struggles, knowing that a lot of the chapter brothers were there for the support I needed. That they were there when I needed them."

Davina felt valued within her sorority, particularly within her chapter meetings. She saw the meetings as a space that she felt where her opinion mattered and she would not be judged. Unlike being in classes or working on group projects with students she did not know, Davina felt confident expressing how she really felt in chapter meetings—even when she disagreed with her sisters. She described,

> it's weird because for other stuff, if I were to work on a group project in a classroom with people I don't know, like there I would be like yeah whatever you think is good, we can do that. But with them it's like no I don't think we should do that. Are you sure? I don't know, I feel a little bit different because I know my sisters won't judge me off of what I say.

Nine also felt a sense of belonging with her sisters in the sense that she could fully express herself without fear of being judged for her perspectives. Nine felt like being with her sisters was a sort of "safe space" where she could feel "comfortable just saying whatever I want and if I say something wrong they'll correct me without being mad at me." Nine's feelings of being safe with her sisters was in contrast to how she felt if she were to post something on social media where, "sometimes I don't know if what I'm saying is right. And if I post on social media someone's not going to be as nice if I say something and it's wrong and my sisters correct me." She also feels like "once I leave my sisters…I'm not necessarily in a safe space anymore. So I mean I always try to hang out

with my sisters and things like that, but when I step out of that space I know that I'm not really in a safe space anymore as I was with my sisters."

As a reflection of this characteristic of belonging, participants often felt a sense of belonging in spaces where they were with other members of their fraternity or sorority. For example all of the members of Kappa Beta reported a sense of belonging in what they referred to as "Selena's spot." Selena's spot was an area in the University A library where the members of Kappa Beta often studied. They named the spot after the singer Selena Quintanilla because one of the members was a huge fan. Paloma said that Selena's spot was a place of belonging because she and her sisters were basically there "every single day until like 2 in the morning so." It is a place she feels "welcomed." Similarly Nine reflected,

> it's just a place that we're always [at], if I'm going to the library, that's the first place I go to to make sure if sisters are there. And usually there's a sister there that I just go and do homework with.

The defining feature of this space was not the place itself. In fact, Paloma explained that if she studies in the library alone she does not go to Selena's spot, but will instead go find "a desk by itself, I just sit there and face the wall and just do my homework." Christina's sense of belonging in Selena's spot was dependent on her sisters being there. She noted, "if I have to study by myself I will just go to my apartment."

Questioning sense of belonging. Although all of the participants felt valued and that they belonged in their organization currently, there have been occasions where some of them did not necessarily feel that way, which illustrates the ebb and flow of sense of belonging. While LGLOs largely played a positive role in participant sense of belonging,

there were also instances when participants did not feel valued and cared for within their organization, which negatively affected their sense of belonging in the LGLO. For Nine, the only times she did not feel a sense of belonging within Kappa Beta was "sometimes at the very beginning" when she and her other line sisters were working to establish their chapter on campus. They all had tasks to complete, but sometimes "older sisters…wouldn't take me seriously because I was a freshman" or they sometimes asked her to do something and then "take over." However the Kappa Beta national representative that led them through the process told them they should be working together, and "the older sisters" recognized "the freshmen also have really nice opinions and we should listen to them as well." Nine thought at this point they realized "our ideas are also valid." After that, things got much better.

The only experience Romeo recalled that made him feel like he did not belong in Nu Sigma was during the first semester he joined. Some of the brothers "invited us to go hang out with them…and watch a football game." When Romeo and the other interests arrived,

> one of the older members of the group, I don't know if he was just having a bad day or if he was in a bad mood, but we walked in…he was like 'oh it's just interests.' So it just kind of made me feel irrelevant and unimportant.

Afterward, Romeo and the other interests talked about it and "were all upset by the comment, we just didn't feel like that was something we wanted to be a part of." However they never really discussed it again and just moved past it. Romeo felt marginalized as an interest by the member, but it was the only time Romeo experienced

an incident like this in Nu Sigma. He asserted that it was "probably the only moment so far within the organization that [I] felt that I didn't belong."

Valued within the Greek community. As an extension of membership in the LGLOs, *where I am valued and cared for* also played a role in participant sense of belonging in the greater Greek community. All of the participants expressed that the campus community either did not understand the purpose of MGC organizations or did not even know they existed. Many believed this lack of awareness was even true of the members of other traditional Greek councils. Participant01 thought that if she were to stop a random person on the campus and ask them to describe Latinx Greek Letter organizations on campus, "they would have no idea." She thought this was a problem because "we do just as much as anybody – as other houses do. And yet we're smaller… but we're not even seen." Feeling as though people did not even recognize the organization was "frustrating at some points…when I'm like 'oh I'm part of Pi Delta' and they're like 'what is that?' 'Oh it's a multicultural sorority.' 'Ok so what do you guys do?' And it's like 'just about everything everybody else does.'" Lacking recognition as part of the Greek community affected Participant01's sense of connectedness with Greek Life at University B as a whole.

Similarly, Paloma did not feel like part of the larger Greek community (including traditional councils) because her organization was not valued. Overall Paloma did not "feel welcomed by them [traditionals] because they don't know what the Multicultural Greek Council is. And like I guess our ideals or values or even process…also they don't really reach out to [the] Multicultural Greek Council to get to know us." As a result, Paloma said, "I don't involve myself in that community."

Karla did not think the campus community at University B understood what MGC organizations are or what their purpose is "at all." To illustrate this point, Karla said she told two of her friends she was in a sorority and they "automatically thought I was in a traditional sorority and I was like 'no I'm in a multicultural' and they were like 'oh I didn't know there was such a thing as that.'" Karla further asserted, "even a lot of traditional Greeks don't know we have multicultural Greek sorority and fraternities." When it came to educating the campus about these organizations, Karla did not think the Greek Life Office really tried to promote MGC organizations or educate people about them. She reasoned, "if they did I feel like we'd be asked to do more things or they would put our names out there I guess. But I don't see any of that. It's mainly us promoting ourselves." The lack of recognition of LGLOs by the Greek community and lack of support from the Greek Life Office caused Karla to perceive a sense of marginalization as a member of an LGLO within the Greek community at University B.

Nine also reflected on feelings of marginalization as an LGLO member within the Greek community and believed there was a lack of support when it came to NPHC and MGC at University A. She expressed that the Greek Life Office

> doesn't really spend too much time on us in a way. Like we aren't as important I guess as the other bigger organizations. And that's something I've felt since I've become a sister. Just that Greek Life kind of, they include us in some stuff, but not in the best ways and stuff like that. So obviously in the Greek Life Office when I have to go and meet with people…I just don't feel comfortable seeing everyone else kind of doing their things and seeing people in their organizations. I

> feel like I'm not their equal because I'm in a different organization. So that's a place I definitely don't feel comfortable in.

Several of the participants from both University A and University B explained that the Greek Life Office tried to be inclusive in some ways, but it was not necessarily very helpful. For instance Participant01 said their organizations were invited to a Greek Life open house event "where interested upcoming freshman would come and get a tour of the houses and get to know a little more fraternities and sororities." However being part of the event was problematic because Pi Delta as well as the other MGC organizations do not have houses. So instead, they "had a poster presentation kind of thing and tabling." Then when the house tour portion began the staff told them "you guys can go." Participant01 thought the event "wasn't beneficial to us at all." Ultimately for Pi Delta, when it came to "recruitment we all have to do it by ourselves. They don't help us recruit at all."

Fernando expressed frustration with a similar event at University A where high school students came to campus to learn about Greek Life. While he thought it was nice that the Greek Life staff tried to incorporate MGC organizations, he thought "it isn't a way to highlight our council" because

> it's hosted at the houses and stuff so when it comes to the Multicultural Greeks, they just kind of set up on a lawn and that's about it for them. So it's kind of unfair just for the fact that there aren't any Multicultural Greeks that have a house.

Davina also knew there were ways the Greek Life Office on campus at University A tried to promote their organizations to the campus, but thought "they do a really bad

job at it actually." Over the summer Davina served as a campus orientation leader and as part of training the team sat through all of the presentations that were included in orientation. Davina reflected that during the Greek Life presentation,

> out of all 30 slides maybe two to five were about MGC and NPHC councils. And they didn't really explain what it is. They just said oh we have these councils and they do these traditions, they aren't traditional and they do stepping, strolling, saluting and they have a different process and they would then talk about what the big houses do.

Seeing how short the sections on MGC and NPHC organizations was made Davina "kind of mad that they spent so little time." Since she knew they would be presenting this information to new students, she asked the presenters several questions to see how they would respond. However,

> anytime I would ask them a question they would be like 'oh we don't know but you can look at their website.' And it's like ok that's fine but do you think somebody's going to take the time to look at a website when they're in front of you wanting to know an answer?

Davina thought that since there were four presenters (all from traditional organizations), it would make more "sense to have one girl from the traditional houses and one guy from the traditional houses and then somebody representing MGC and then one representing NPHC." She spoke to the president of Kappa Beta about it and they suggested the option to orientation, but were told "students that present this presentation over the summer get paid to do this. And so it turned out they don't have funding to have someone from the MGC or the NPHC councils to present over the summer." Davina

thought if it was possible to have presenters that were more knowledgeable of the organizations it would "help a lot actually. If these students know that we're here."

Though most of the participants expressed in some way that the Greek Life Office and traditional Greek community did not seem to value their organizations, one primary way several of the participants thought they were shown they were valued on campus was by being provided a campus office space. For instance, Luis, Juan, and Delta all identified their organization's office space as a place of belonging. Luis explained that the Zeta Alphas applied and were approved to receive an office space within the Multicultural Center. He explained that the process is not really competitive, but certain culturally based organizations are "grandfathered into the multicultural center" and have first claim to office space, but they all still have to reapply. The Omega Iota office was located in the student union in a large space that provided cubicles to around 30-40 student organizations. These spaces were available by application, though "those who already have spaces have priority to renew their office space contract." Similar to University B, the offices were not provided through Greek Life, but through the Union. To Juan's knowledge, Omega Iota has always had an office space in this area. Since they do not have a house, they "use it essentially like a house, we use it to meet up when we have meetings, we use it to study or just use it to goof around and waste an hour between classes or to eat lunch." Even though the office space was not necessarily visible to students that do not also have a space there, Juan thought that having the office space "within the campus, it feels like it increases a sense of belonging. I think it really confirms our presence on campus as well." Although the space was open to all types of student organizations, Delta thought the fact there were other multicultural Greek

organizations there played a role in his sense of belonging. While helpful, he "wouldn't say it's the deciding factor." Even more than the other students in the space, Delta thought that the fact that they were treated fairly and respectfully by the staff in charge of the space made him feel comfortable in the space and reinforced his sense of belonging.

Where I Have a Role or Responsibility: LGLOs and the Greek Community

[During chapter meetings] everybody has something to say. So it makes you feel part of it because you're there, you're active. (Participant01)

Participant01's statement alluded to the fact that the LGLOs were typically so small that everyone eligible in terms of GPA was essentially required to take a leadership position, which played a part in their sense of belonging in the organization. Participant01 thought that having an active role in Pi Delta made her feel more connected to the organization and that if she did not have something to contribute she could easily "slide by and be like oh I'll go to this event maybe once a month." As previously discussed, Strange and Banning's (2015) organizational environmental dimension entails how responsibilities are divided and carried out within an organization. Accordingly, *where I have a role or responsibility* is the main characteristic of belonging where the organizational environment came into play. Like Participant01, Christina emphasized the difference membership size made in the extent that members of LGLOs could connect with one another as opposed to large traditional organizations asserting,

> because there's so little of us…like for mine I think right now we have 13 sisters in the chapter. And it's very different from having like 100 girls you know?...We bond a little bit more because I can individually get to know each of them at a personal level.

Having a role or responsibility was influential in some of the participants' decisions to even join the LGLO in the first place. As Nine reflected,

> when I joined Kappa Beta I saw it as more of an organization kind of where I could grow my leadership skills….And obviously the sisterhood part is really important to me and I came to appreciate that…and then I could have people who were supporting me and could have my back and teach me how to do things.

Likewise as described in Luis's story, being told by a friend that Zeta Alpha needed leaders like him was influential in his decision to join.

Once participants were part of the LGLOs they assumed meaningful roles and responsibilities within the organizations that caused them to feel valued and a sense of belonging. Juan for example noted that the first specific time he could recall feeling a sense of belonging within Omega Iota was after the members completed their adopt a highway cleanup. Although Juan was unable to go, he "volunteered to take the vests back to the DOT and like everyone was like thanks we really appreciate that, you're saving us like a half hour of our day, that's great." Being appreciated for helping was significant to Juan because when he was in MASO for instance, "people would almost expect it, but just feeling that appreciation to do stuff was probably one of the first times I felt it." Juan's experience emphasized the need for participants to not only have a role in a given setting, but also to feel valued for that contribution.

Outside of chapter meetings, the first time Romeo recalled feeling a sense a belonging within Nu Sigma was as an interest when he and the other interests were having a meeting to plan an event. He reflected that they "were talking about the events we were going to do" when Romeo "made a remark that got the group sidetracked, so we

went off in a tangent." He then "was the one to step up and say hey guys let's get back on task and do what we came here to do. So I, even though I led them to get sidetracked, I brought them back." Because of this sense of authority, Romeo felt like "a leader." He added, "that's a moment I felt like hey I have a say, I matter, somebody notices me. And everytime I speak to them they would really pay attention to what I had to say. So I really created that sense of belonging."

Hector described his responsibility in the fraternity as well as the role of his brothers in terms of keeping one another accountable. He detailed, "we still keep each other connected, accountable, keeping each other in check and making sure we're ok. In case one of us disappears, [we question] Where is he at? Where is he?" Hector also explained that when the brothers plan and host events they "do it together, we don't do it separately, we come together and bring up ideas and just make it happen." The essence of the fraternity as a collaborative effort was important in ensuring everyone had a role or responsibility.

As previously discussed, due to the small size of the organizations and the number of leadership positions available, Davina noted that "basically everybody in the chapter has a position." Davina has only been a member of Kappa Beta for a relatively short amount of time, yet she has had multiple leadership opportunities. Davina thought leadership was an important part of Kappa Beta. She believed the organization

> works toward empowering women and making sure you find who you are and sometimes finding who you are you gotta put yourself out there, push out of your comfort zone.

Davina further explained that while members are pushed to possibly step outside of their comfort zones to take on leadership roles, they are supported by their sisters along the way.

Paloma also reflected on the importance of being pushed out of her comfort zone in her leadership positions within Kappa Beta. She thought that if she never joined Kappa Beta, she would have "a lot more free time," but "probably wouldn't have as many leadership opportunities as I have now." Prior to her membership in Kappa Beta, Paloma never had "a high leadership position" in an organization. Now that she has experienced high leadership in Kappa Beta, it

> has helped me feel comfortable within my organization and within my position and knowing that if I mess up, no one is going to get angry at me…they'll be like hey you messed up, but we can help you fix it.

The support Davina and Paloma received from their sisters positively influenced their sense of belonging and was also evident in the way participants described feeling important and that they mattered during weekly chapter meetings. Lori for one expressed feeling a sense of belonging in her weekly Pi Delta chapter meetings. She explained that "meetings are formal, we do Roberts Rules of Order…This is where we practice our professionalism so I feel like it's not a thing where we just go hang out and talk." The fact that Lori had something to contribute to the meetings because of her responsibility as a chair was an important part of her belonging in that space. She described that when "it's your turn to talk,… the sisters, they listen to you and ask questions…It gives you a sense of authority." In that space, "I can really say my opinion and it will matter."

Similarly in terms of the weekly Kappa Beta chapter meetings Christina asserted, "I know that's a place I belong. I know I will always be welcome because it's with my sisters." Chapter meetings were a space that Christina knew she had a role and "I always felt like what I have to say matters and I hope all my other sisters do too…because everyone is a part of the sisterhood so everyone's voice matters."

Delta was one example of a participant whose sense of belonging in his fraternity wavered because of this characteristic of belonging. While he generally always felt a sense of belonging within Omega Iota, when he "very first joined" he "had no experience on any of the roles there" and did not know much about the chapter operations yet. Because of his "inexperience, [it] made me feel a little bit like I didn't matter a whole lot. But now that I've held about five leadership positions, I really don't feel that anymore."

Where I Share Interests or Values with Others: LGLOs and the Greek Community

> *The reason why I'm in this fraternity is Zeta Alpha reaches out and gives an opportunity for leaders on our campus to strive in. To give them a sense of belonging and home with other Latino leaders or other leaders also in the fraternity. Even though I might not fit in with the majority of them personality-wise, there are few who are like me also where I can make a deep connection*. (Luis)

Luis's statement shed light on the influential role of sharing interests and values with the members of the LGLOs on participant sense of belonging. All of the participants discussed ways sharing interests and values within the LGLO contributed to their sense of belonging. Importantly, these shared interests and values provided a foundation as members planned organizational events and initiatives such as fundraising,

sisterhood/brotherhood, social, philanthropic, and cultural events. Culture was an important component of these shared interests and values and therefore overlapped with *where people look like me* and *where my racial identity and culture is valued*. However there were also other examples of ways this characteristic manifested in participant experiences within the LGLOs.

When Christina first met the members of her sorority, she thought that seeing a group of Latinas was **"**very exciting" and she "was really excited just to learn more about what it was." Being among other Latinas initiated her sense of belonging with them, but it was reinforced when she "started learning more about the actual sorority and I was like I like this. I tie in, like our beliefs are the same, I don't know I guess you could say I found a home away from home."

Nine's sense of belonging as a Kappa Beta was particularly strengthened through their shared knowledge of social justice issues. She explained that they stay current on issues "and are able to talk about it within ourselves like in chapter meetings, we'll be like 'oh did you hear what happened?'…we talk about it and are able to like have sisters give their opinion on things like that." Nine added that "a lot of sisters have gone to the national conference on race and ethnicity so we have learned about those things and I think we're just all a little more aware." She appreciated having her sisters to discuss these issues and thought that if she did not have them, "I wouldn't have anyone else to talk to about and hear other experiences, hear other thoughts and things like that. So I definitely feel a sense of belonging with them especially."

Davina's sense of belonging as a Kappa Beta was strengthened by knowing that her connections extended beyond her chapter sisters to other Kappa Beta members as

well. These connections to other members of the sorority were easily established because of their shared interests and values grounded in the organization. Davina explained that there are aspects of the sisterhood that bonds them together more quickly than normal strangers. One element that facilitates the development of a bond is the process they all go through to become a member. Davina explained,

> something special about the sisterhood is that no matter if you pledged last year, or if you're going to pledge this year everything you did or going to do to become a sister—every sister before you has done it before. No matter what. Even if you pledged 2 years, or if you pledged in Chicago or California, it doesn't matter we all did the same thing to become a sister.

Though Luis knew his brothers cared for him and supported him, there have been times when he did not feel like he belonged in Zeta Alpha because he had different interests and forms of expression than the majority of his brothers. He described,

> how I consider myself, well first heterosexual, but at the same time I have a feminine gender expression…the gender expression is maybe how I act, how I interact with others, or the things I do are just not stereotypical hypermasculine or alpha male. It's just a little away from that maybe more on the feminine side. The sassy Luis who likes to gossip and socialize with friends and just hang around or maybe go shopping or go on cruises and all that stuff or to travel and all that stuff. Just things that are just maybe not stereotypical with men. That's who I am and maybe why I don't fit in as well.

Luis explained that the "majority" of his brothers fit the "hypermasculine" stereotype, while in terms of his interests,

> I'm the type of person who doesn't like to party or go out to drink heavily and all that stuff… Or also…Just how the majority of the guys like to play soccer, I hate sports. Or how they like to work out. I hate working out (laughs). How they like to play video games, I hate video games.

Because of these differences Luis has "had those moments where I feel like I don't belong." However his sense of belonging was reconfirmed after attending the fraternity's national convention over the summer. He met another member from a chapter in a different state who he asserted was his "twin." Luis noted that in terms of their personalities they were "just the same—feminine gender expression, Latino male heterosexual. Going through similar childhood experiences, low income student, first in family to go to college and just a lot of other things that made us similar." Meeting another brother that shared so many characteristics reminded Luis why he joined the organization and that it did not matter how he identified because "at the end of the day you're still brothers. At the end of the day everyone values you because you're in it."

What Does Sense of Belonging Look Like?

As described in the previous sections, participants' sense of belonging in particular microsystems was strongly influenced by the presence of the five characteristics of belonging. This section provides additional insight to what sense of belonging looks like in terms of its manifestation in Latinx college student experiences.

When participants were in places of belonging, they felt like they could be themselves and were happier, more confident, and felt safe. Lori considered her apartment style residence hall where she lived with a sorority sister as "somewhere where I belong. It's like my home so I feel like I can do whatever when I'm here and just be

myself...I don't feel like people are watching me or judging me for who I am." Nine felt a sense of belonging in the TRIO SSSP Office and described it as "a place where we can go and just be ourselves." Nine further explained that it was "one of the places I just always go. Maybe I'm not having a good day and just need to talk to people or see people."

The association between a sense of belonging and where participants could be their authentic selves was also an important part of their experiences in their fraternities and sororities. The importance of feeling comfortable enough to be themselves was illuminated in why Omi believed it was important to have a sense of belonging to a subculture of a university. She asserted,

> you want to feel comfortable around a certain group of people that you know you can be yourself and not be someone else to try and fit in. So I think having those small subgroups helps out so much on campus. Especially if it's predominantly White.

Omi's description of feeling comfortable and that she could be herself in a place of belonging was in contrast with how participants felt in places they did not belong. For instance Davina felt confident expressing her opinions in her sorority's chapter meetings because she did not feel as though they would judge her, whereas she was not likely to voice her perspectives while working on class projects with other students. When Luis passed the Greek housing area on campus he said, "it just makes me feel uncomfortable." He tried to avoid the area, but in times when he had to pass through he noted, "I'm either speed walking or just head down looking at my phone a little more. Really just trying to get from point A to point B and trying to get through there."

Being in a space where participants experienced one or more of the five characteristics of belonging also caused many to feel "safe" in a given place. In fact, half of the participants discussed their sense of belonging in relation to feeling safe. While individuals often used the term to describe places of belonging, negative experiences—particularly in relation to campus climate—sometimes decreased the extent to which participants felt safe in particular spaces. Notably, the term was often used in relation to the characteristic, *where people look like me*. Omi, for instance, considered the multicultural center on campus as a "safe quarter" for racially minoritized students to work as opposed to the Union, which was "predominantly White." Hector noted that due to the increased tensions on campus from the election it was important for him to be around "my multicultural community—multicultural student affairs office, the student support services building, services program." He asserted that these places were "set up kind of like a safe place we can go." Likewise, Christina considered multicultural events on campus as places of belonging because "that space becomes…like a safe space in a way." The term "safe" also emerged in the characteristic, *where I am valued and cared for* and was reflected in Paloma's description of sisterhood as "somewhere where you can be safe." Nine explained that when she saw her mentor and sorority advisor, Dalihla, "she always greets me with "hi mija how are you?" Mija was something that Nine's mom often called her, therefore she reflected that when she heard it, "it just kind of makes me feel safer." Likewise there were times when lacking a sense of belonging caused them to feel unsafe. For instance, Davina's recent experience in her class in the Business Building where the majority of the class raised their hands in support of Trump made her feel as

though she did not belong in that space. She reflected, “since that day I don’t feel entirely safe in that class.”

Interconnections in Micro and Macro Levels of Belonging

Individual experiences within the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems interacted together to influence Latinx student sense of belonging within those systemic levels. In terms of sense of belonging within the university setting, of the fourteen participants, only three reported feeling a sense of belonging within the University as a whole when they first started college. The shock of being in such a complex environment away from their families, in many cases for the first time, coupled with the fact that there were few racially minoritized students on campus created stress in the transition. For most participants, the struggle to transition stemmed from lacking a sense of connectedness to the University in terms of finding a community in which to belong. Notably, the three participants that began feeling a sense of belonging entered their respective institution with one or more pre-existing communities they could connect to. For instance, Omi was essentially part of the Mexican American Student Organization since before she even started college through her brother’s officer role in the organization. Hector was part of a learning community as well as a scholarship community that remained connected through social events and meetings. Finally, Karla was a member of the marching band, which met together daily for practices.

Microsystems

Microsystems were salient components of Latinx sense of belonging because they were settings that participants encountered daily. As participants progressed through their college careers, they encountered a number of experiences within microsystems that

confirmed their place on campus and reinforced their sense of belonging as well as those that disconfirmed their place at the University and negatively affected their sense of belonging. Ultimately, participant sense of belonging on the institutional level was highly contextual and began in microsystems as depicted in Figure 5.1. Microsystems were comprised of the physical, organizational, socially constructed, and human aggregate environments. While each of these environmental components assumed important roles in shaping Latinx sense of belonging, it was evident that the human aggregate environment was the most influential element. Participants entered particular microsystems and the environmental components of the microsystem affected the extent that individuals experienced the five characteristics of belonging within that setting. The extent to which participants experienced the characteristics of belonging in a microsystem largely determined whether participants felt a sense of belonging in a given microsystem. As a result, individuals often felt a sense of belonging in some microsystems and lacked belonging in others. Microsystems interacted in different ways through mesosystems and exosystems, which all shaped student perceptions of the overarching macrosystem. Student interactions through these systemic levels and perceptions formed due to these experiences determined whether they felt a sense of belonging within the university as a whole.

Mesosystems

There were also ways that mesosystems, linkages among two or more microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1997), played a role in participant sense of belonging. As illustrated in Figure 5.2, mesosystems are comprised of two or more microsystems, each made up of its own physical, organizational, socially constructed, and human aggregate

environmental characteristics. The environmental characteristics of a given microsystem interacted together to define the extent to which individuals experienced the characteristics of belonging within a particular microsystem, which then influenced individual sense of belonging in the microsystem. Mesosystems came into play in participants' sense of belonging when participants felt a sense of belonging or lacked a sense of belonging within a particular microsystem and then translated that sense of belonging to one or more other microsystems.

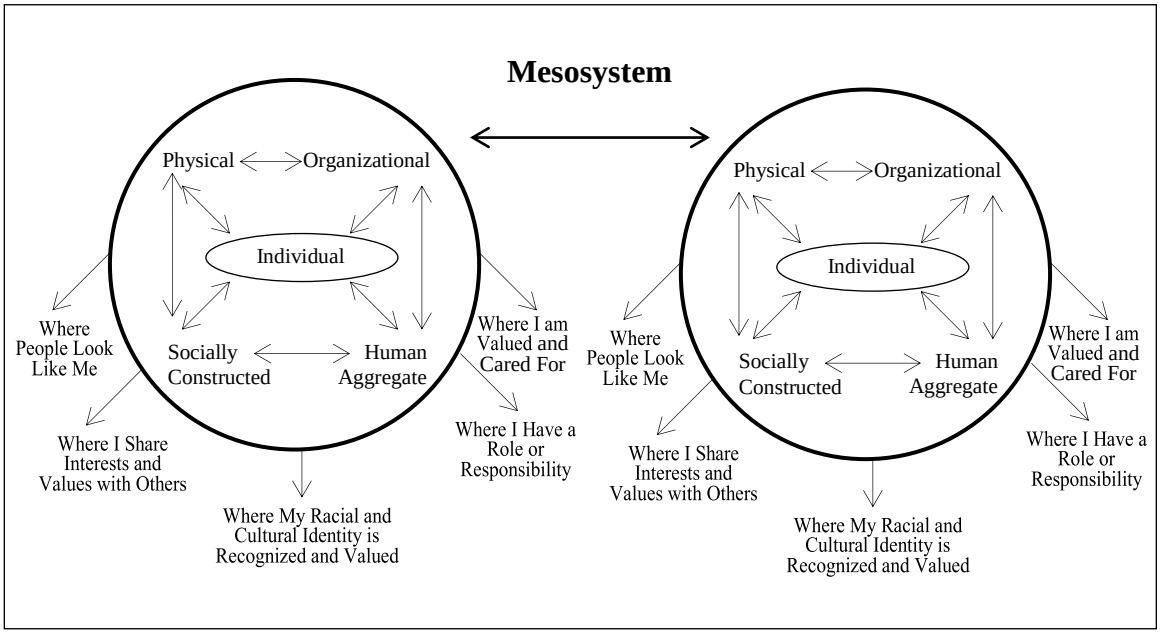

Figure 5.2. Mesosystems in Latinx Student Sense of Belonging

Romeo's sense of belonging in the Engineering Career Services Office and the College of Engineering was an example of a mesosystem at play. Romeo felt a sense of belonging in the Engineering Career Services Office, a particular microsystem, because it was a place where he felt cared about and valued by the staff through his mentorship with a staff member and by receiving information and resources. As a result, belonging in the Engineering Career Services Office boosted his sense of belonging in another

microsystem Romeo was part of—the College of Engineering. In Juan's experience, he felt a sense of belonging in the STEM Forward program because he was part of this program since the 8th grade and felt a connection to the staff and other student members. Juan also worked for the STEM Forward Office during college for some time. Juan identified the STEM Forward Office as a place he felt a sense of belonging and thought it was "a place of comfort, I feel welcome there." Because the STEM Forward Office was in the Science Building, it boosted his sense of belonging in the building as a whole. Juan said that having the STEM Forward Office "definitely increases the sense of belonging I have at University A and the building." However Juan's sense of belonging in the Science Building was not entirely based on his familiarity with the STEM Forward Office; he also took classes within the building, which meant that he had multiple roles within the building.

Juan's translation of a sense of belonging from the STEM Forward Office to the Science Building was different than Lori's experience where she felt a sense of belonging with her scholarship program, but not within the Physics Building where the program had bi-weekly meetings. She felt intimidated by the space because the individuals working in the building looked "so smart" with their "white coats and glasses." Lori did not feel like she belonged there because she "[did not] know what all of this is." Though Lori felt a sense of belonging in one microsystem, the interaction between these microsystems did not boost her sense of belonging in the other.

Another way that mesosystems played a role in participants sense of belonging was when individuals associated particular microsystems with other microsystems in which they felt a sense of belonging. For instance, Participant01 felt a sense of belonging

at diversity events on campus such as the Pi Delta new member showcase and the annual stroll off in the Greek community. Even though these events did not occur daily within the Union and the Court, it still boosted her sense of belonging being in those places because that was where the events were held and, as a result, she associated them with places where her culture was recognized or valued.

Experiences within microsystems also caused participants to feel more or less accepted by the people in particular places, which often played a role in the degree to which they felt they belonged. One way this manifested in regard to mesosystems was when participants' experiences with hostile climates for diversity within a given microsystem also negatively affected their belonging in other microsystems they were part of. For Paloma, being part of the silent protest against Donald Trump's campus visit opened her eyes to prejudice and racism she never witnessed before. Her experience in this particular microsystem changed her day to day experiences in other microsystems on campus. As a result, when she was in other spaces on campus, she became more aware of prejudice and stereotypes in a given setting.

For many of the participants, being involved in organizations and communities within the campus such as their LGLO or other communities positively affected their sense of belonging in terms of their day to day interactions and sense of comfort on campus. Juan for instance explained that through his experiences, he has become "connected with NPHC, MGC members, Greek Affairs Staff and professors." Because of these connections he asserted that "walking around on campus it's odd if there goes by a day that I don't know a couple people that I see on campus… So that's probably why I have more sense of belonging on campus." In another example, though Luis always felt

comfortable going to the student union "because that's where food is," his sense of belonging in that space was strengthened during his sophomore year as a member of the Mexican American Student Organization. Through his involvement planning events for the organization he "had to figure out things of how the union operates, how room reservations work, and the rules and regulations on events." He explained that he became more comfortable with the Union as a whole in addition to the staff members who would "also greet me there and because they know me." For Juan and Luis, feeling more connected in terms of knowing more people and being familiar with spaces increased their sense of belonging. Though notably for some, such as Paloma and Romeo, their sense of belonging in organizations and particular microsystems on campus did not translate to a general sense of belonging on campus. Instead, their belonging was limited to particular places.

Exosystems

Similar to mesosystems, exosystems also consist of two or more microsystems. However as noted in Figure 5.3, unlike mesosystems, one or more of the microsystems "does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 316).

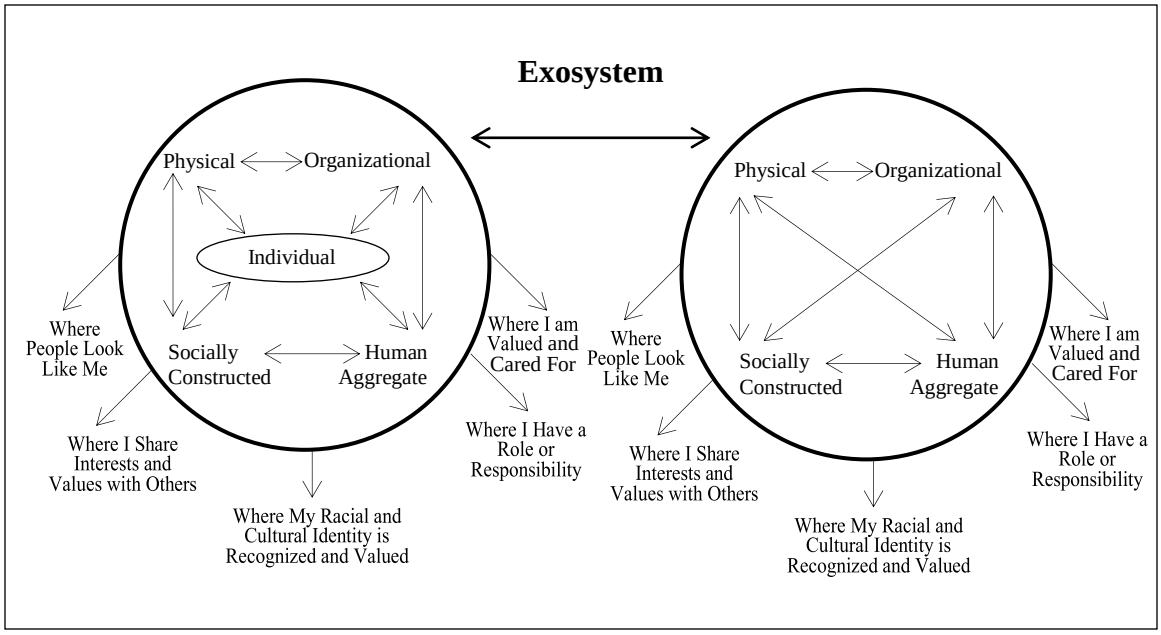

Figure 5.3. Exosystems in Latinx Student Sense of Belonging

There were some notable ways exosystems manifested in student experiences in terms of belonging. One example was how participants' perceptions of campus inclusivity was often influenced by hearing about other people's experiences on campus. One example of an exosystem playing a role in sense of belonging was Omi hearing the story of a football player that was told he was not welcome at a Greek house because he was Black. Omi reasoned that because starting football players were highly revered athletes at University B, if they treated him that way, she doubted that she would be welcome in those places.

Exosystems were also embodied in campus responses to campus climate issues and initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion. Participants were aware of racial events that occurred on campus, whether by being directly involved in them or by hearing that these things occurred on campus. Regardless of how they knew the incident occurred, what was important was how higher level administration decided to address the issue. Students were not part of these decision-making processes, but the implementation

of these decisions greatly affected the extent to which students felt a sense of belonging at the university.

Participants' frustrations and sense of disconnect from the greater Greek community in terms of traditional Greek organizations was a primary example of an exosystem's role in belonging. Many participants felt that the Greek Life Office gave more attention and resources to what were deemed as traditional Greek organizations as opposed to multicultural or historically Black fraternities and sororities. Although participants were not part of traditional Greek organizations, their perception of these organizations as being more valued than MGC groups often caused them to feel less belonging to the Greek community as a whole. Perceptions of being less valued than traditional organizations also led many students to lack a sense of belonging in particular microsystems such as the Greek Life Office and the Greek housing area on campus, which affected participant sense of belonging in the macrosystem of the greater Greek community outside of their connection to other multicultural organizations.

On a positive light, several of the participants discussed their close connection with other members of organizations within the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) and the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). Participants discussed the bond with other MGC and NPHC organizations in terms of supporting one another and attending each other's events. For instance Participant01 explained that members of the MGC and NPHC organizations often attended each other's new member reveal events. Members also collaborated in events together such as the community garden the Omega Iotas worked on with members of an Asian based sorority on campus.

Macro- and Chronosystems

While participant interactions with elements of the environment in a given microsystem determined whether they felt a sense of belonging in that particular microsystem, dimensions of the macrosystem, "overarching pattern of micro- meso- and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 317), compounded together to determine whether participants felt a sense of belonging within the university as a whole. As depicted in Figure 5.4, the extent to which participants felt a sense of belonging in a given microsystem rippled through to influence their experience with mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems—all of which were underscored by the element of time through the chronosystem. Figure 5.4 illustrates the macrosystem in terms of being made up of the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. All contextual levels including macrosystems were embedded within the chronosystem or the "historical period in which the person lives" (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, p. 641).

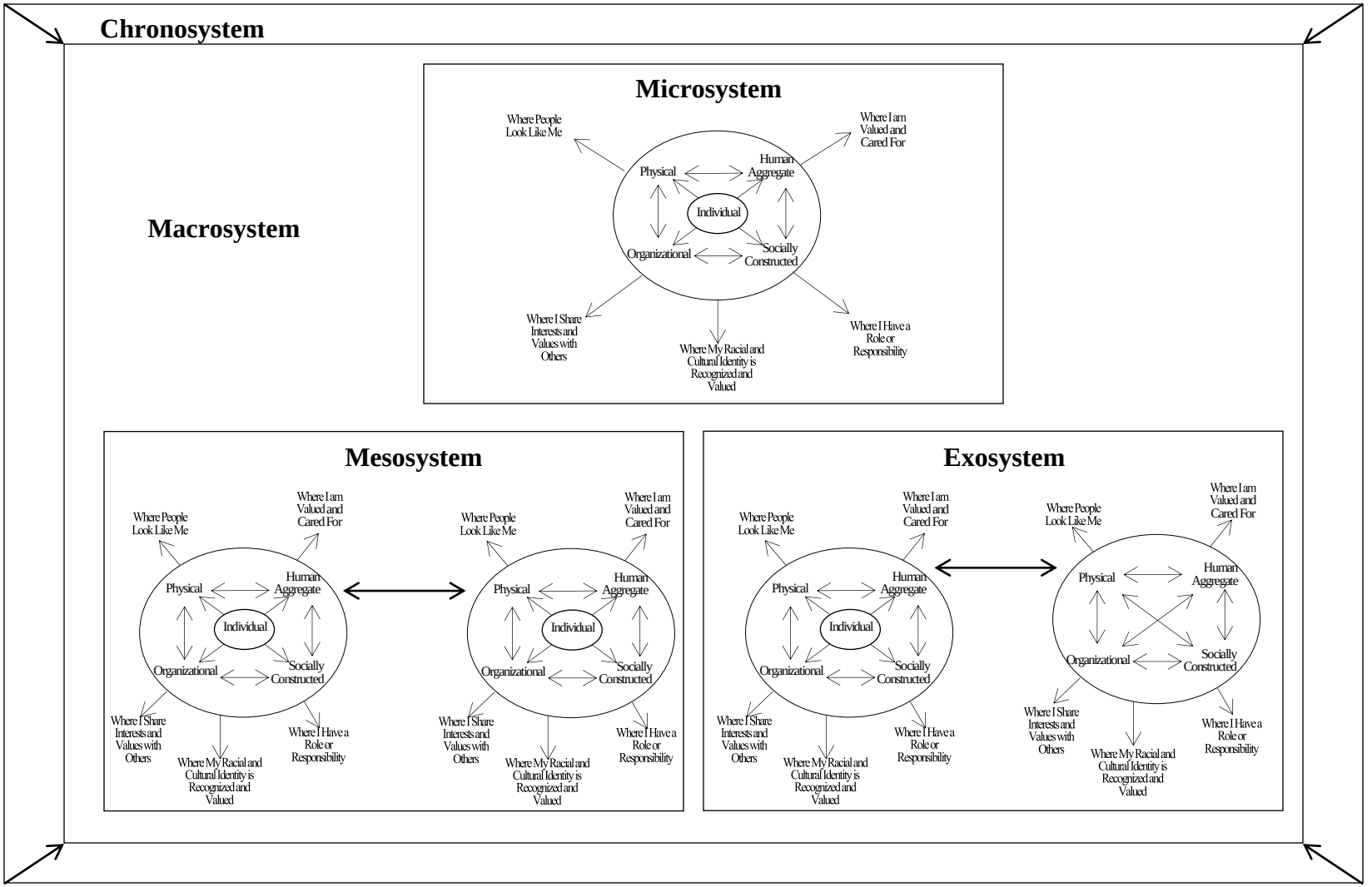

Figure 5.4. Environmental Influences in Latinx Student Sense of Belonging

Importantly the macrosystem also influenced the extent to which participants believed their university community was accepting of racial and ethnic diversity, which also affected their sense of belonging. When the participants were asked if they believed the campus community as a whole was accepting of racial and ethnic diversity, three believed it was, three thought it was not, and the rest fell in between. The differences in how participants described their sense of belonging is notable particularly because even for participants that reported feeling a sense of belonging to the university as a whole, many still identified particular microsystems on campus that they did not feel a sense of belonging within. Participant reflections on their sense of belonging to the institution pointed to a crucial distinction in terms of how participants describe their sense of belonging and the importance of distinguishing between the micro and macro levels of campus belonging. Distinction between micro and macro levels is an important consideration because lacking a sense of belonging in particular microsystems can indicate issues on campus in terms of inclusivity and equity that need attention in order to best serve the needs of all students, including those from racially minoritized backgrounds.

Institutional Level Sense of Belonging

Whether participants felt a sense of belonging within their institutions overall was a bit more complex than simple yes or no responses. There were essentially four different categories that participant responses to this question fell into—those that did not feel a sense of belonging; those whose sense of belonging was murky; those that felt a sense of belonging and discussed their belonging in relation to the communities they were part of; and those that also felt a sense of belonging, but primarily attributed their belonging to

the fact they were a student, and were working toward an academic goal. The first group included three participants—Fernando, Paloma, and Romeo. These individuals did not feel a sense of belonging in the university as a whole, but noted that they did belong in one or more sub communities within the university. Fernando believed he felt more of a sense of belonging within the outreach programs his fraternity worked with as opposed to the greater university adding, "I don't feel like they do enough for people of Color on campus." Paloma juxtaposed her sense of belonging within the institution with how she felt about her community. She reflected, "I feel comfortable within the community I'm a part of and the community I decide to be involved with, but maybe not so much with the community as a whole." Romeo did not feel a sense of belonging within the greater campus community because he felt like a number and ultimately that he did not matter. He noted, "if I disappeared I don't think anybody would have noticed."

Two participants, Christina and Nine, felt into the next category where their sense of belonging within the university as a whole was murky, but they still had a sense of belonging in one or more subcontexts. Both of these individuals expressed that it was difficult to feel a sense of belonging within the greater community when campus climate issues were occuring at University A. Christina asserted, "it's kind of hard to feel like you belong when things for example like the poster thing happened." However she did "have a community within the campus that I feel I belong to. And to me that's all that really matters." Ever since the Trump protest on campus and campus climate tensions increased, Nine's sense of belonging at University A suffered. She thought these issues persisted on campus because she has heard stories from her sisters and others on campus that were speaking Spanish and "people on the street, like White individuals would

say…'oh stop speaking Spanish, go back to Mexico, this is America.'" Overall Nine thought "the campus climate has been a little more sticky especially now with the election coming up" and as a result was unsure of whether she really felt that she belonged at University A.

In the next category, seven of the participants—Delta, Hector, Karla, Luis, Participant01, Lori, and Davina—asserted that they felt a sense of belonging within the university, but discussed their sense of belonging in terms of their communities. Even though Delta initially questioned his place at University A he said, "I definitely do feel like I belong there because I found my niche. I found my community." Hector felt a sense of belonging since he started at University A and thought it was "tough" to think of a time when he felt as if he did not belong within the greater campus community because he had his fraternity and "most of the time I'm with them…so it's kind of hard not to feel that sense of belonging." Karla's sense of belonging within her organizations influenced how she felt in terms of her belonging to the campus as a whole "because I'm really involved in them. I just feel like…University B is like my life right now." Luis felt a sense of belonging within the greater campus community at University B "because of my experiences I've had so far and the leadership positions I've taken up on campus." Because of these experiences he felt more connected to people and places on campus. Participant01 said she "definitely" felt a sense of belonging within the campus at University B and asserted that her sense of belonging began during her sophomore year when she became involved different departments and programs such as a study abroad group and the McNair Scholars program. Notably within this group, Lori and Davina said that even though they believed they belonged in the campus as a whole, it really did not

matter because they had a sense of belonging in their communities. Even though Davina did not really think about whether she felt a sense of belonging on campus and was "not really concerned about it," she believed she does feel a sense of belonging within the greater campus community at University A because "I feel like I have a lot of support everywhere." Lori said, "being part of my organizations has given me that sense of belonging that to me is just the only thing that matters."

In the final category of responses, Juan and Omi responded that they felt a sense of belonging on campus, but answered primarily in terms of their belonging academically as students in the institution. Omi asserted that she belonged to the greater campus community at University B because "we're here for the same reasons, for an education and I think that's all that matters." Juan believed he belonged to the university as a whole because "I belong academically and that's what the university should be based on." However he also attributed his belonging to his connections with people and groups on campus through his position as a student leader.

Campus Climate

Campus climate was a reflection of the socially constructed environment. As evident in participant responses regarding their sense of belonging at the institutional level, incidents that negatively shaped campus climate often also negatively affected participant sense of belonging. Essentially these incidents communicated to participants that their culture was not valued on campus and they were not accepted by either the individuals within the community or by the university as a whole as evidenced through administrative action or inaction. Notably all participants that responded that they did not feel as though they belonged in the greater university community or that their belonging

was murky were from University A, where recent incidents had occurred that negatively influenced participants' perceptions of the campus climate.

Furthermore, the fluidity of sense of belonging was evident in several participants' experiences. While an individual may have felt a sense of belonging or lacked belonging within the greater university, that did not mean it was not subject to change depending on participant experiences. Often these changes in belonging stemmed from participants feeling that their institution valued their culture and promoted diversity and inclusion or the opposite. For instance Davina said she felt a sense of belonging because she had "support everywhere." She never experienced any discriminatory situations or racial microaggressions first-hand on campus. Yet, the culmination of the effects caused by the election on campus caused her to again question if others wanted her to at University A. She reflected that knowing there were individuals on campus that supported Trump "makes me wonder who around me actually thinks that I should be here…Or shouldn't be here. That I don't belong on their campus basically or don't belong here in general."

Hector was a participant that had a particularly positive overall demeanor regarding his sense of belonging within University A and it was fairly constant from the time he started at the institution. However recent campus climate incidents have affected his perspectives of the institution and caused him to question the extent to which the campus was accepting of racial and ethnic diversity. As a whole Hector thought it was "tough to say" whether the campus community at University A was accepting of individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. He explained, "I feel that [since] the posters for White supremacy have been around campus there is a lot of fear."

It made it difficult to feel as though the campus was accepting when it seemed that there were students "trying to spread that White supremacy around the campus area." Regardless of the poster incident, Hector still said he felt a sense of belonging because in times where his sense of being safe on campus was threatened, he had his multicultural communities to find solace within.

Role of Subcultures in Sense of Belonging

Reflections on the process of developing individual sense of belonging at the institutional level shed light on the integral role subcultures of the university assumed in this process. As a particular subculture of the university, membership in the LGLOs served as a means to further examine this dynamic. All participants currently felt a sense of belonging in their LGLO, though that is not to say they never experienced disconfirming experiences in those organizations. All but one participant asserted that if they were not part of their LGLO, they would not feel a sense of belonging at the university. Karla was the exception, responding that she felt a sense of belonging within several campus organizations, which have all played a role in her belonging to the campus as a whole. She did not think she would still have an overall sense of belonging if she was not involved in those communities. However since she is involved in so many organizations, if she was not involved in one, she would still have the support from others.

Belonging within a subculture of the university was critical to participants' overall experience, regardless of whether they also felt a sense of belonging within the institution as a whole. Individual responses to questions regarding the importance of belonging in a campus subculture illuminated how participants interpreted the role of

campus subcultures. Fernando thought it was important for students to have a sense of belonging in a community within the university because "if you don't have that sense of belonging you're constantly questioning yourself whether you belong here or not. Belonging, not just being on campus but where you belong continually as you pursue your degree." Lori believed it was "very important" for students, particularly Latinx students, to find a sense of belonging in a subculture of a university

> Because coming to college…sometimes for people it's just not a very happy transition. Sometimes people just feel alone or just feel lost in general…But I feel like it's very important to find those people, find your belonging because…you'll be happier, you'll be more comfortable during your college experience and if you don't find that I feel like you won't be as successful.

Romeo thought that having a sense of belonging to a subculture of the university was "almost a crucial aspect of college." Romeo thought sense of belonging in subcultures had particular importance for Latinxs specifically in a predominantly White institution because

> our culture makes us stick together. So maybe that's why I chose the Greek letter organization I chose. As Latinos and Latinas, it's very important that we not only graduate from college, but kind of do the best we can in order to help our families and everyone else who is going to benefit from us getting a degree.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of this study regarding the role of involvement in a particular university subculture, Latinx Greek letter organizations, in how Latinx college students develop and make meaning of their sense of belonging within PWIs. It

began with a description of how the characteristics of belonging manifested in campus and external microsystems followed by an examination of how these came to light in microsystems encountered by the participants through their involvement in an LGLO. Within these sections, the chronosystem was also illuminated as examples of the role it played emerged.

Where people look like me was perhaps the most influential characteristic of belonging in participant sense of belonging because it was a visible characteristic the participants recognized immediately upon entering a particular setting. It was initially shocking for the participants to see so few racially minoritized students on campus; being one of the only or few racially minoritized individuals in a particular setting caused many participants to instantly feel marginalized. Importantly, there were also ways that interactions with the people in a particular setting could amplify and mitigate feelings of marginalization and belonging in a particular place. The significance of interactions underscored the critical role of the human aggregate environment. While the physical environment also assumed an influential role in Latinx student sense of belonging, it was primarily the people within a place that made the biggest difference. Although *where people look like me* played the biggest role in participant sense of belonging, the presence of the characteristics of belonging, *where I have a role or responsibility, where people look like me, where I am valued and cared for, where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued,* and *where I share interests or values with others,* were all integral to the extent that participants experienced a sense of belonging in a particular microsystem.

The chapter then provided details regarding how sense of belonging manifested in participant experiences. These details were followed by a description of the interconnections in the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems experienced by the participants and their role in developing a sense of belonging. The meso- and exosystems came into play when participant sense of belonging in a particular microsystem influenced the extent to which they felt a sense of belonging in another microsystem. The emergence of exosystems in relation to participant sense of belonging was notable because it showed that participants did not have to directly interact within a microsystem for it to influence their sense of belonging. Hearing stories about others' interactions in a particular place or developing preconceived notions of a microsystem based on the perceptions of the people within that space was sometimes enough for the participants to determine whether they felt a sense of belonging in a particular microsystem.

Macrosystems involved the interconnections between the micro-, meso-, exo-, and chronosystems and informed institutional level sense of belonging. Finally, elements of the chronosystem that were most influential in participant sense of belonging were connected to the 2016 presidential election and resulting social climate. Given Donald Trump's visit to the University A campus during the presidential campaign, campus climate issues surrounding the election played a stronger role in participant sense of belonging at University A compared to University B. The chapter then culminated with an examination of institutional level of sense of belonging as reported by the participants as well as the influence of campus climate and institutional subcultures in Latinx college

student sense of belonging. Participant reflections underscored the significant role of campus subcultures in their overall college experience and sense of belonging.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Implications, And Conclusion

This study explored the role of involvement in a particular university subculture, Latinx Greek letter organizations, in how Latinx college students developed and made meaning of their sense of belonging within PWIs. This discussion will first examine the findings of the study in light of the research questions that guided this work: How do Latinx college students involved in LGLOs at PWIs experience and develop a sense of belonging? What role (if any) does involvement in Latinx fraternities and sororities play in how Latinx college students experience and develop a sense of belonging at PWIs? To address these questions, the role of campus subcultures in Latinx college student sense of belonging is first examined, followed by a description of the innerworkings of the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems in Latinx sense of belonging. Next is a discussion of the significance of microsystems in Latinx sense of belonging in PWIs. Microsystems, "the immediate, face-to-face setting in which the person exists" (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, p. 302), were encountered by participants daily and, as a result, played a significant role in Latinx sense of belonging. Due to the influential role of microsystems in Latinx sense of belonging, substantial attention is given to this element by illuminating ways Strange and Banning's (2015) human aggregate, physical, socially constructed, and organizational environments contributed to participant sense of belonging within the microsystems, but also translated to macro levels of belonging. The chapter will conclude with implications for practice and research.

Campus Subcultures in Latinx College Student Sense of Belonging

Upon entering University A and University B, one thing all participants had in common was their surprise to see so little racial diversity represented on campus. Given

the fact that participants entered their institutions with an array of past experiences that shaped their initial perceptions of the institution, individuals differed in the degree to which these perceptions impressed on their belonging. This could partially be explained by the concept of cultural dissonance, which Museus (2008a) described as "a result of inconsistencies between that individual's cultural habitus and newly encountered culturally-specific information and experiences" (p. 217). Many of the participants explained that their schools or home communities were more racially diverse than their university, which made the transition to college a bit shocking for some. Delta for instance reflected, "my first two weeks were really difficult…I remember walking to my apartment and being close to breaking out in tears. I wasn't adjusting." Similar to Delta, many participants experienced cultural dissonance and struggled to transition to the institutional environment. As in the case with other participants, connecting to a campus subculture helped Delta overcome the struggles he initially experienced adjusting.

In many cases involvement in LGLOs facilitated participants' transitions to college and served as collective cultural agents (Museus & Quaye, 2009). As Museus and Quaye (2009) explained, collective agents "provide students with smaller and more manageable environments within the larger campus, offer a conduit for socialization into the larger campus community" (p. 72). Only three of the participants felt a sense of belonging within the institution from the beginning of their college experience and these individuals were already connected to subcultures within the university from the start. For all other participants, finding a subculture in which they could connect with others in was critical to their belonging. In short, because they did not see themselves reflected in the institutional human aggregate environment, participants sought out membership in a

group where they saw their identities reflected. Museus and Quaye asserted that cultural agents could reduce the level of cultural dissonance experienced by the individual. Importantly, Museus and Quaye reasoned, "what appears to be more important than detachment from their cultures of origin is the extent to which students' traditional cultural heritages are validated by their interactions" (p. 84) with cultural agents. This was very much the case in this study as participants did not seek to cut ties with their Latinx cultural backgrounds, but rather intentionally sought out organizations to bolster those connections. When Latinx culture was validated through these organizations it in turn had a positive effect on participant sense of belonging.

In addition to serving as cultural agents, the role of LGLOs also reflected Attinasi's (1989) concept of "scaling down" (p. 255) the institution. Attinasi's study of the persistence of Mexican American college students showed that student persistence was supported by individuals scaling down the complexities of their institutional environments by connecting to smaller and more manageable components of the campus community. In this study, the participants' connection to a campus subculture mirrored the scaling down process. In addition to the complexities of entering a large institution, participants were also overwhelmed by being in an environment where most students were White and as a result, the participants felt different. Scaling down the institution by finding a niche in a community they could belong within was vital to their transition to a predominantly White university.

In addition to easing many of the participants' transition to a predominantly White institutional setting, importantly the LGLOs provided ongoing support as students continued to navigate their college experiences. Museus and Quaye (2009) asserted that

cultural agents "can help racial/ethnic minority students navigate their home and campus cultures simultaneously" (p. 72). This was particularly the case as participants found ways to integrate their home and campus cultures through the LGLOs such as by hosting cultural events on campus.

Micro-, Meso-, Exo-, Macro-, and Chronosystems in Latinx Sense of Belonging

As students continued in their college experience, they regularly encountered particular microsystems in academic and non-academic settings that influenced their sense of belonging within the microsystem and often rippled into their institutional level sense of belonging. Some noteworthy microsystems in terms of influence on participant sense of belonging included classes, LGLO chapter meetings, the Greek housing area on campus at University A and B, the University A TRIO SSSP Office, and the University A and University B Multicultural Centers. The extent that individuals experienced the five characteristics of belonging within a particular microsystem—*where I have a role or responsibility*; *where people look like me*; *where I am valued and cared for*; *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued*; and *where I share interests or values with others*—largely determined whether they felt a sense of belonging within the microsystem.

While microsystems were a fundamental player in participant sense of belonging, there were also ways that mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems assumed roles in student sense of belonging. Mesosystems and exosystems involve linkages among two or more microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1997). The distinction between mesosystems and exosystems is that in exosystems, one or more of the microsystems "does not contain the developing person" (p. 316), but indirectly affects the

microsystem in which the individual is contained. Meso- and exosystems came into play when belonging in one or more microsystem(s) shaped the extent to which participants felt a sense of belonging in another. The role of exosystems was significant because it showed that even when the participants were not part of a particular microsystem, the inner-workings and interactions within that microsystem could still influence participant belonging in another microsystem they were a direct part of. This was evident for many in the case of the Greek community. Although participants were not part of traditional organizations and, as a result, were not part of microsystems associated with traditionals, they still formed perceptions of these organizations that influenced the extent to which participants felt a sense of belonging in microsystems such as the Greek housing area on campus and the Greek Life Office. Macrosystems were in essence the culmination of student experiences within the micro-, meso-, and exo- systemic levels in addition to aspects of overall institutional culture, which all informed student sense of belonging at the institutional level. As the element of time, the chronosystem exerted influence in all of the systemic levels and was particularly evident in relation to the 2016 presidential election.

The Significance of Microsystems in Latinx Sense of Belonging in PWIs

Microsystems played a particularly impactful role in terms of the participants' sense of belonging. Microsystems were comprised of the physical, organizational, socially constructed, and human aggregate environments. The interconnections of these environmental characteristics influenced the extent to which participants experienced the five characteristics of belonging within the microsystem and inevitably affected whether they felt a sense of belonging within that particular microsystem. The following sections

will discuss ways these environmental characteristics came to light in Latinx college student sense of belonging within a predominantly White institution.

Human Aggregate Environments

The human aggregate environment as described by Strange and Banning (2015) is comprised of the human characteristics—the attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral patterns—of the people within the environment. The human aggregate environment played a particularly critical role in participant college experiences and their resulting sense of belonging. As Strange and Banning stated, "campuses dominated by one cultural, ethnic, or age-based group are inherently challenging and therefore are less likely to attract, satisfy, or retain individuals who do not share traits with the dominant group" (p. 52). Similar to Strange and Banning's assertion, the findings of this study underscored the challenges Latinx college students experienced within predominantly White institutions. The challenge of being in a space where the majority of the people within it did not share racial or cultural identities with the participants was a primary influence on the significance of the characteristic *where people look like me* and as previously noted, was somewhat reflective of cultural dissonance (Museus, 2008a).

To begin, being in predominantly White settings was a visual indicator that the participants' racial and cultural identities differed from the other people within that space. Museus (2008a) explained that

> if the predominantly White cultures of a campus perpetuate values, beliefs, perspectives, and assumptions that are drastically incongruent with the precollege cultures of racial/ethnic minority students, the result can be a noticeably high level of cognitive dissonance among those minority students. (p. 217)

In light of the experiences of the participants in this study, it was not always necessary for individuals to view their values and beliefs as "drastically incongruent" in order to experience high levels of cultural dissonance. For instance some participants such as Fernando and Paloma had difficulty connecting with their White peers simply because as Fernando asserted, "I just don't feel the connection. We just don't talk about the same things." As a result, when these participants were in predominantly White settings they felt disconnected and lacked a sense of belonging in that space.

Person-environment similarities within the institution. Another component of the human aggregate environment that came into play in participant sense of belonging were person-environment similarities. Fernando and Paloma's challenges connecting with their White peers was reflected in Strange and Banning's (2015) discussion of the human aggregate environment in which they stated, "dissimilarity with the environment's dominant characteristic results in person-environment incongruence and personal discomfort" (p. 73). Similar to Gonzalez's (2002) findings that a lack of Chicano representation on campus caused participants to feel a sense of "marginalization and alienation" (p. 202), as participants entered particular microsystems, a lack of other racially minoritized individuals within the setting often immediately caused them to question their belonging in the space. However as one of Strayhorn's essential aspects of belonging asserted, sense of belonging "likely changes as circumstances, conditions, and contexts change" (p. 22). Accordingly, if an individual initially felt a sense of belonging or lacked a sense of belonging in a particular space, there were also ways that feelings of marginalization and belonging were amplified and mitigated through interactions with others within the space.

Schlossberg (1989) described marginalization as being in contrast with feeling "central, important" (p. 7) in a particular context. Participants' sense of marginalization was sometimes amplified by othering experiences in which interactions with people in a particular place caused the participants to feel alienated. One example of an othering experience was when Omi and her sorority sister were approached by a student at a University B football game and asked if they had tickets. Omi felt that this was done solely on the ground that she was Hispanic since none of the surrounding White people were asked the same. Though the football stadium was one of the first places Omi felt a sense of belonging in on campus, the experience caused her to question her belonging there. Likewise Fernando and his brother felt as though they were being stared at by students and members of the community during the University A homecoming game tailgate, which caused them to feel different from the rest of the people in that setting and ultimately to lack a sense of belonging there. An important way participants were able to mitigate feelings of marginalization in a particular microsystem was by having friends with them in those spaces. For example, Luis was sure to coordinate his class schedule with his friends because he knew he did not feel comfortable in the predominantly White classroom settings in the College of Business Administration at University B.

Person-environment similarities within LGLOs. Person-environment similarities played a particularly important role in terms of membership in the LGLOs. Strange and Banning (2015) asserted that when a person enters a particular environment, "the person is likely to be encouraged for exactly those behaviors, values, attitudes, and expectations that attracted him or her to that environment in the first place, thus reinforcing person-environment similarities" (p. 74). Because participants generally did

not experience person-environment similarities with the institution as a whole, the process of reinforcing these similarities as described in this statement did not occur on the institutional level. However person-environment similarities were an important component of participant experiences in the LGLOs. Similar to Villalpando's (2003) finding that involvement in ethnic based organizations provided participants the opportunity to remain connected to their cultural heritage, sharing elements of individual culture and cultural values within the LGLO reinforced the rationale that drew the participants to join the organization in the first place. As part of an organization with other Latinxs, participants were in a space where they shared culture and often even promoted it through cultural events on campus. Importantly, being among other Latinxs meant that participants could have a place where they belonged and could maintain a connection to their Latinx culture. The significance of shared culture was reflected in the characteristics of belonging *where people look like me, where I share interests or values with others, and where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued.* The LGLOs brought members together based on shared principles and goals. These principles were used to guide the organizations in essentially everything they did from fundraising to philanthropy involvement and the cultural events they engaged in. Shared interest in promoting the Latinx culture was another important feature that defined these groups as collective cultural agents (Museus & Quaye, 2009).

Being among other Latinxs was an important way that the LGLOs helped participants maintain their racial/ethnic identities, but there were also essential ways they provided a platform for shared interests and values through opportunities for participants to share elements of their cultural identities with the greater campus. The first was by

planning events that celebrated Latinx culture and were intended to share parts of that culture with the University community as well as through social justice focused events that shed light on important social issues that connected to the Latinx community. Participants were additionally given the opportunity to support other Latinxs in their educational journeys through the LGLOs. In this way, they were not only able to use the cultural agents to "navigate their home and campus cultures" (Museus & Quaye, 2009, p. 72), but also to help others to do so. In this light the LGLOs provided an avenue for the participants themselves to serve as individual cultural agents for others, which enhanced their sense of belonging.

The role of individuals. One dimension that was not reflected in Strange and Banning's (2015) environmental characteristics was the role of individuals. While Strange and Banning discussed collective patterns of behavior in terms of the human aggregate environment, the influence of individuals was not emphasized. In this study, the role of individuals was important in terms of participant sense of belonging—particularly in regard to the characteristic, *where I am valued and cared for* as this was a characteristic where particular individuals played a significant role in participants' experiences. Individuals in this study reflected on a number of individuals that affected the extent to which they felt valued and cared for in a given setting, and in turn whether they ultimately felt a sense of belonging in those places. This characteristic was reflective of the importance of mattering in relation to sense of belonging. As Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) stated, mattering is "to believe that the other person cares about what we want, think, and do, or is concerned with our fate" (p. 164). Showing participants that they were cared for and valued was an important part of this concept. For example, Juan

knew that his academic advisor and his chapter advisor were staff members on campus that made time for him regardless of whether he made an appointment. He felt that they genuinely cared about his success and associated both of their offices with a sense of belonging. Yet these experience were distinct from Juan's interactions with the staff in the financial aid office and speaker committee. He felt devalued by the leader of the speaker committee and pushed away by the financial aid staff. These exchanges caused him to feel "like they had better things to do" and that he did not matter. Even though his negative experience was limited to the leader of the speaker committee and he knew student workers in the Financial Aid Office, feeling devalued as a whole within the offices caused him to lack a sense of belonging in these places. This spoke to the role that a single person or interaction could have on students' sense of feeling valued and cared for, and ultimately whether they felt they belonged.

Physical Environment

The physical environment was another environmental characteristic of microsystems that affected Latinx student experiences. The physical environment is grounded in the concept of place, which Strange and Banning (2015) described is made up of "the built environment—buildings, sidewalks, parking lots, natural and designed landscapes" in addition to "the many people-made objects and artifacts of material culture that adorn the campus and interact with students, faculty, staff, and visitors alike" (p. 12). Importantly, though this study often referred to places of belonging, the physical characteristics of the space were often not as important as the people and interactions that occurred within that place. In Strange and Banning's (2015) description of the physical environment they stated, "the campus as place is an important factor that influences

students' attraction to and satisfaction with a particular institution" (p. 14). In regard to attraction, the significance of place was reflected in many of the participant's experiences. Luis for one appreciated many aspects of the physical environment at University B when he visited the campus such as its size and landscaping, noting it was "love at first sight." This was an important draw for Luis to attend the institution as well as several other participants that reflected on their appreciation of the university's physical environment. Though the physical environment was also part of the participants' satisfaction with the institution in relation to their sense of belonging, the physical place seemed to play a much lesser role, particularly when compared to the human aggregate environment. For instance, Participant01 felt a strong sense of belonging in a building she described as "dingy." As reflected in the five characteristics, sense of belonging was most often about the people in a particular place as opposed to the physical characteristics of the place itself.

Strange and Banning (2015) distinguished between the functional dimension of physical environments and the symbolic. While the functional dimension entails whether the physical structure serves a function and purpose as it was intended, the symbolic speaks to the messages that the physical environment communicates as well as "the meaning people ascribe to them" (p. 15). The symbolic dimension was closely tied to Strange and Banning's assertion that the physical aspects of campus environments can serve as "conduits of nonverbal communication" (p. 17). Strange and Banning explained that aspects of the physical environment could communicate institutional "values and tacit images of what it means to be a student on campus" (p. 17). These nonverbal messages described by Strange and Banning were evident in participant experiences. One

significant way nonverbal messages from the physical environment played a role in participant sense of belonging was by communicating the extent that others on campus recognized and valued participants' racial and cultural identities. Participants identified several examples of how their identities as racially minoritized individuals or Latinxs specifically were recognized or valued within the physical environment. Luis and Juan both reflected on physical representations on campus of the Latinx culture, which positively affected their sense of belonging. For Juan, seeing the statue at University A that represented immigration affirmed that the university recognized Mexican Americans on campus. Luis thought that having a food truck on campus at University B that served food from the Latinx community was a positive boost to his belonging.

Although Juan and Luis's experiences exemplified how the physical environment could positively affect participant sense of belonging, there were also ways the physical environment devalued participants' racial and cultural identities and negatively affected their sense of belonging. These examples demonstrate how the physical environment can implicitly communicate nonverbal messages that negate explicit messages in support of equity and inclusion as espoused by institutions. One example of such a message was the Donald Trump flag Participant01 saw at University B, which she saw as support of Trump's negative views of racially minoritized individuals. Another example were the White supremacy posters that appeared on campus at University A. These posters served as a physical reminder that there were individuals on campus that did not think that racially minoritized students were welcome. The posters, in conjunction with other climate issues on campus, caused some students to question whether they belonged on campus and whether the community was as accepting as it espoused. Strange and

Banning (2015) reflected on the effect that "campus graffiti" could have in terms of what it communicates about campus culture noting, "racist or homophobic messages visible for months on the side of an academic building may communicate a lack of concern for creating a safe and comfortable environment for all inhabitants" (p. 20). The essential argument made by Strange and Banning proved to be true in participants' experiences in the case of the White supremacy posters, but the element of time played a lesser role. Although the posters at University A were only up for perhaps a day or even less than 24 hours, they still sent students a message regarding the campus climate and affected student sense of belonging.

Another way the nonverbal messages communicated by physical spaces played a role in participant sense of belonging was through what Strange and Banning referred to as "displays of self" (p. 22). Strange and Banning offered a particularly relevant example of a display of self by contending that, "the positioning of Greek letters on fraternity and sorority houses, illustrate how the physical environment is used to convey messages about individual and group ownership" (p. 22). The Greek houses on campus at University A and B indeed made their ownership of these houses known, which was primarily why more than half of the participants identified the Greek housing area as a place they did not belong. The participants saw these groups as predominantly White and perhaps intentionally so. Hector felt that there was a sort of "discrimination" among the Greek councils. Several of the participants either directly experienced negative encounters with traditional organizations or heard stories of others that had and this caused them to believe these organizations were not inclusive of all people. Therefore, they often associated a lack of sense of belonging with the physical structures that

represented these organizations—the houses. Lori, for one, did not believe her Latinx culture would be valued in traditional organizations. This was one of the primary reasons she chose not to join a traditional organization. Lori thought if she joined a traditional sorority, her mother would be judged because she only spoke Spanish and was "very Hispanic." However being with her sisters, Lori knew they all valued her culture and she did not feel like she had to hide who she was.

One role of the physical environment that was not explicitly discussed by Strange and Banning was the notion of physical spaces serving as physical reminders of experiences individuals had within a particular setting. For instance, the members of Kappa Beta all felt a sense of belonging in what they called "Selena's spot" in the library. They associated this space with their sisters and felt that it was a place that felt safe and comfortable. However several commented that if their sisters were not there they would choose to study at their home or elsewhere. In this regard, the place was primarily important because of the people within it. Similarly, Participant01 associated a sense of belonging with the student Union and the courtyard near the Union because of the diversity-centered events that occurred in those spaces. Even when the events were not occurring, the fact that they did happen within those spaces was symbolic and carried forward as a place of belonging.

Socially Constructed Environments

The third environmental characteristic that defined microsystems were the socially constructed environments. Strange and Banning (2015) elucidated that "socially constructed models of the environment recognize that a consensus of individuals who perceive and characterize their environment constitutes a measure of environmental

press, climate, or culture in a setting" (p. 115). One important way the socially constructed environment in terms of environmental press played a role in participant sense of belonging was through dominant characteristics or patterns of behavior of the people in a given setting. Participants identified several negative patterns of behavior within their respective institution. When they were in spaces where the patterns of behavior broke away from these negative patterns, it increased their sense of belonging.

These patterns of behavior were what distinguished the University A TRIO SSSP Office and the University A and B Multicultural Centers as spaces of belonging for nearly all participants. These spaces began as places of belonging because they were locations where participants saw other individuals from racially minoritized groups whom they believed could also relate to their experiences as Latinxs and racially minoritized individuals. In essence, they provided a platform from which participants could simply talk to others that they believed shared similar backgrounds and experiences as they did. What amplified participant sense of belonging in these spaces was participants' view of the other individuals in these spaces as uniquely open and welcome to conversations. At University A in particular, many of the participants reflected that students tended to avoid interactions and seemed closed to conversation. The ease to which participants engaged in conversations and interactions with others within the TRIO Office and Multicultural Centers were unique and broke away from behavioral norms within the greater institutional culture. As a result, many participants identified the TRIO Office at University A and Multicultural Centers at University A and B as places of belonging.

Similarly, Romeo's experience with his professor that intervened when his performance in his class was slipping was another example of how experiences that broke away from behavioral norms in the institution were significant to participants. Based on his experiences, Romeo felt that it was uncommon for faculty to reach out to students individually and that it was possibly "not really important to them" to do so while they had several hundred students at one time. However the fact that this particular professor took the time to talk things through with Romeo showed him that she cared about his success and, as a result, he felt a sense of belonging with this faculty member. This juxtaposition in Romeo's experiences was reflective of Schlossberg's (1989) description of mattering as being contextually driven. Romeo felt that he mattered to this particular professor and as a result felt a sense of belonging in that specific space rather than in all classrooms on campus. In contrast, he felt like he was more of a number in other classes and did not feel that other professors cared about his success, thus he did not feel a sense of belonging in those classroom settings.

Campus climate. Strange and Banning's (2015) description of the socially constructed environments included the influence of climate. At the institutional level, issues of campus climate and the extent to which participants believed their campus environments were inclusive of racial and ethnic diversity often played an important role in whether participants believed their racial identity was recognized or valued in a given place as well as within the greater campus community. This aligned with findings from studies such as Hurtado and Carter (1997), Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005), and Locks et al. (2008) regarding the connection between perceptions of racial tensions and negative climates for diversity and sense of belonging. Particularly negative campus climate

incidents as well as overall negative perceptions of campus climate tended to have a similar negative effect on participants' sense of belonging on campus as a whole.

It was noteworthy that when experiences with campus climate were more negative in nature they tended to bring students closer to their multicultural communities as they found solace in those communities. This in turn often strengthened their belonging in those spaces. This particular finding somewhat reflected Hurtado and Carter's (1997) assertion that ethnic based organizations could "mediate the effect of adverse climates" (p. 335). For some participants, having a sense of belonging within a subculture of the university by way of their LGLO helped to balance these negative experiences out and help the participant to maintain an overall sense of belonging at the institution. However in cases where the experiences were more significant to the participant, this was challenging or simply not possible for them to overcome. For instance, Paloma's experience at the protest against Donald Trump's visit to University A during the 2016 presidential election was the first time she directly experienced forms of racism. Following her experience, Paloma has not felt a sense of belonging within the greater University even though she has formed a strong sense of belonging within her LGLO.

Paloma was not the only participant affected by Donald Trump's visit to University A. Having the University A president welcome presidential candidate Donald Trump on campus caused many of the participants to question the extent to which the community really valued their culture and identity as members of the Latinx community. Fernando thought the fact that the University president welcomed Trump in spite of the things he said about people of Color and others was a "betrayal." Fernando's reaction

indicated how strongly this affected the way he viewed the president and, as a result, the University. Again, similar to the findings of Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005), the perception of negative climates for diversity negatively affected student sense of belonging.

Responses to campus climate incidents. Another important dimension of the organizational environment that influenced participant sense of belonging were responses to campus climate incidents. Examples of these responses manifested within the Greek Life Council meetings as well as at the institutional level. Institutional responses to climate issues were a primary example of espoused versus enacted ideals (Strange & Banning, 2015). However it was clear through the participant experiences that the enacted values were more important to their sense of belonging than the espoused.

At University A, campus climate issues resulted in a panel discussion including the University president. In response to the discussion, the University took actions such as appointing a Chief Diversity Officer. Some participants including Nine thought that these were good steps, but felt that there was still more work to be done. Fernando was one that was more skeptical of these initiatives noting that it was "just a band-aid to cover up a bigger issue." Unlike University A, there were no major campus climate incidents reported by multiple participants that attended University B. However individual participants did describe certain events that played a role in their perception of campus climate. For example Participant01 explained that following the culturally offensive skits during her freshman year, the Dean sent out an apology noting, "this isn't going to be tolerated on campus," which was an indication of the espoused ideals. However the students that took part in the skits never apologized or were reprimanded for their actions, therefore the response was lacking in terms of enacted ideals.

Likewise, Luis reflected on an incident in which a campus senator used the "n word" during a meeting. As a result, the student was removed from his position and the Chancellor started a campaign against racism on campus. While these were good steps, Luis did not see changes beyond the speech from the Chancellor and the removal of the senator. In other words, the espoused response did not align with the enacted response. Luis thought having discussions and events about "what minority students face and how they're different than the rest of the student population" would have been more meaningful. Sending emails was a common institutional response to campus climate issues, but the problem was that these were one-sided conversations. Participants reflected that it was more beneficial to engage in discussions with the campus community regarding issues that occurred. But these cannot simply happen once and solve everything, institutions must engage in ongoing dialogue regarding campus climate.

Espoused versus enacted values also came into play within the Greek community. For instance Delta explained that the Greek Life staff said they would do workshops to address racial issues, but never followed through. This caused Delta to lack confidence that the Greek Life Office was committed to inclusivity and equity within the Greek community and was part of why he did not trust the staff and lacked a sense of belonging in the Greek Life Office.

LGLO culture. Culture was another aspect of the LGLO's socially constructed environment that played an important role in the extent that participants felt a sense of belonging within the organizations. Critical components of the LGLO culture stemmed from the bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood to create a familial culture and culture of caring. Within the LGLOs, all of the participants described membership in their fraternity

or sorority in terms of being with people that cared about them and supported them when they needed it. This strongly aligned with Moreno's (2012) findings that a Latina-based Greek-letter served as a "family away from home" (p. 46) for the study's participants. Just as Moreno described, the familial concept was also a very salient component of the participants in this study and was often a term used to describe the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood. The support the LGLOs provided was particularly critical for participants when they struggled. Romeo for one thought the support he received from his brothers in terms of his academics helped him to be successful in college. Delta emphasized that he was "sinking" in his first weeks of college, but joining Omega Iota gave him the support he needed and ensured that he instead "floated."

Participants also often discussed feeling valued in terms of knowing that they would not be judged by their sisters or brothers and that when they were within their organization they could feel confident in expressing their thoughts and opinions. This was evident in how Nine described feeling "safe" to discuss issues with her sisters, whereas she would feel more insecure posting her thoughts to the public through social media. In a similar vein, when Hector approached the founding fathers and founding brothers of Omega Iota at the national convention, he was welcomed by these individuals. Even though they were higher up within the organization, they took time to speak with him and take a picture with Hector and his brother, which showed him that he mattered in the fraternity.

Organizational Environment

The organizational environment was the final environmental characteristic embodied within the microsystems. Essential components of the organizational

environment include implicit and explicit goals as well as the resources and designation of roles and responsibilities needed to achieve organizational goals (Strange & Banning, 2015). The essence of the organizational environment entailed how responsibilities were carried out to achieve the goals of a given organization, which is why *where I have a role or responsibility* was largely embodied by this environmental characteristic. In terms of the LGLOs, the small size of the organizations meant that most—if not all—members held some sort of leadership position. This ensured that the participants felt important and that they mattered within the organization (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Delta exemplified how having a role could influence participant sense of belonging. He reflected that when he was just beginning as a member of Omega Iota, he lacked an understanding of the leadership roles within the fraternity and his lack of experience caused him to "feel a little bit like I didn't matter a whole lot." However after holding multiple positions in his fraternity, he no longer felt that way.

In terms of the greater campus community, it was often important for participants to have a role or responsibility within a given place in order to feel a sense of belonging. This was the case for Christina in the fashion magazine club she was part of. Christina became part of the club because she wanted to be involved in her major. Once she entered the meetings, she felt different from her peers because she was the only Latina in the group, but she decided to persist and continue on in the organization. However, because she was never given a significant role or responsibility within the organization, she ultimately "felt like I wasn't really contributing anything for the magazine" and decided to leave the organization. Christina's experience pointed to the significance of centralization and distribution of power (Strange & Banning, 2015) in the extent to which

participants felt that they were in a space *where I have a role or responsibility*. In Christina's experience with the Magazine Club, responsibilities were too centralized. Juan's experience in ethnic based organizations prior to joining his fraternity exemplified a lack of centralization. In Juan's club, no one was taking on any responsibility but him and it was just too much. As a result, Juan also lacked a sense of belonging in the organization and quit.

Implications for Practice

This work offered an in-depth look at Latinx student sense of belonging in terms of its connection to campus subcultures. While many factors played a role in students' overall sense of belonging within their respective university, it was clear that finding a sense of belonging in a campus subculture was an important part of the overall experience of participants in this study. All participants experienced some degree of cultural dissonance upon entering their institution and the extent to which was able to navigate this differed. There were several important implications for practice and research that could be drawn from this work.

Student Communities

One critical way that all participants were able to experience belonging on campus, regardless of whether that translated to the greater university, was by connecting with communities on campus. One way this was embodied in student experiences was through involvement in academic or recreational student organizations that spoke to their interests or values. For one, a number of participants were part of organizations that connected to their major in addition to other interest groups such as a recreational sports team. While several participants came into college knowing they wanted to join a campus

organization, others were not aware of the benefits they offered and more so fell into their involvement. Several of the students explained that they heard about campus involvement through things such as the new student orientation they attended, however what often made the difference in whether they actually sought out organizations to join was hearing this from mentors, faculty, or staff in a one-on-one setting. This underscores the importance of not only discussing these opportunities during orientation, but also through individual discussions with students about involvement. In addition, a great majority of the students connected with their organizations through campus-wide organization fairs. Therefore ensuring that these opportunities are offered and are well-promoted on campus are important considerations in connecting students to involvement opportunities.

While it was overall very helpful for students to have opportunities to join campus organizations, there were also instances in which being involved did not positively affect student sense of belonging. In these occasions, being in a setting where participants felt different from others sometimes played a part, but was more often the result of not having a specified role or responsibility in the organization or perhaps even having to take on too much responsibility. In this light, encouraging students to join campus organizations would not useful if they are poorly organized and do not offer members ways to contribute. Therefore one implication for practice stems from student affairs departments responsible for the oversight of student organizations. Ensuring that organizations receive training on ways to engage their members and to cultivate as many of the characteristics of belonging within the organization would be an important addition to organization training initiatives.

Supporting Ethnic Based Student Organizations

Importantly, the five characteristics of belonging— *where I have a role or responsibility, where people look like me, where I am valued and cared for, where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued*, and *where I share interests or values with others*—were not mutually inclusive or exclusive within any given microsystem or subculture. Based on the participants' experiences, it was apparent that experiencing even one characteristic could positively influence their sense of belonging within a particular microsystem. However it was clear that two characteristics of belonging, *where people look like me* and *where my racial identity and culture is recognized and valued*, were particularly influential in Latinx college student sense of belonging. These characteristics were evident in the LGLOs and were particularly important to participants as they transitioned into a large predominantly White institution and adjusted to the shock of seeing so few Latinxs or other racially minoritized individuals. The significance of these two characteristics underscored the important role that ethnic based student organizations such as LGLOs may have on Latinx college student sense of belonging.

Although ethnic based student organizations have been contested for their seemingly isolating nature, for the participants in this study, involvement in LGLOs was instrumental to their overall college experience. The findings showed that these subcultures acted as cultural agents by easing participants' transition to college while still providing a way for students to maintain ties to their Latinx culture. Even further, the LGLOs not only provided participants the opportunity to be in a space where their culture was recognized and valued because they shared that culture with other organizational members, but also gave individuals a platform from which they could share their culture

with members of the greater university and surrounding community. Thus, institutions should ensure that ethnic based organizations are available to students on campus and that students are encouraged to explore the option of joining such organizations. In addition, institutions should carefully consider whether ethnic based organizations including LGLOs are provided sufficient support to ensure these groups not only exist on campus, but that they can thrive.

Responding to Issues Regarding Campus Climate and Inclusivity

When issues occurred on campus that negatively affected campus climate, the event itself was significant to participants, but perhaps even more important were the institutional responses to such events. Based on the participants' perspectives, there were several key considerations including timing, message, and follow-through. Multiple participants discussed institutional responses in terms of timing. When football players at University B took a knee while the National Anthem played at a game, Participant01 appreciated the quick response by higher level administration in support of the players noting that it made her "proud" to be part of the university. After a series of racial incidents at University A over the past year, the president sent out a video sternly communicating that these actions were not acceptable at the institution. Davina was happy that this video was made, though she thought it should have happened a long time ago. Fernando, however, thought it was simply too late to change his perspective of the university, but hoped that they would do better for future students. Although immediate responses are not always feasible, institutions should remain cognizant of the element of time and of the nonverbal messages they send to students as reflected in how quickly issues are addressed.

In terms of message, it was not only important for issues to be addressed, but also the way they were addressed was important to students. For instance, when the White supremacy posters appeared at University A, the president sent out an email to the campus. However Christina was frustrated by his focus on how the posters violated poster policies on campus instead of emphasizing how students could be affected by racism. Institutions should carefully consider the semantics of messages to ensure they are emphasizing the intent of the message. Skating around campus climate issues rather than addressing them in a straight-forward manner could cause students to question whether the institution is really committed to inclusivity and equity.

Follow through was another critical part of participant perspectives of campus climate and institutional actions. Putting out videos or statements did not trick students into believing that issues were being addressed on campus if they were not followed by meaningful action. In short, rather than saying that something would be done, participants were more appeased with actual follow through. For instance, Luis explained that following the racial slur by the student government senator at University B, the chancellor began a campaign essentially against racism on campus. However it lost steam and Luis never really saw any changes that resulted from this campaign. Luis thought that rather than say something was unacceptable at the institution, it would have been much more effective to engage in discussions with students about these issues and to implement events around inclusion. In general, many participants expressed that emails were simply not enough to put their minds at ease. One initiative that was helpful was offering forums in which students could discuss issues or voice concerns to higher level administrators.

Implementing regular conversations with the campus could play an important role in making students feel safe and included in the campus environment.

Greek Life

This study resulted in some unsettling findings concerning participants' perception of the value of Multicultural Greek Organizations within the greater Greek community. This underscored several implications for practice in terms of Greek Life Offices including increasing awareness of Multicultural organizations, striving towards equity among the councils, and working towards greater community and collaboration among all Greek councils.

All of the participants reflected on the lack of awareness the campus as a whole had in terms of what the Multicultural Greek Council was and the types of organizations that existed within this umbrella. As a member of the campus orientation team, Davina provided insight to the lack of information that incoming students were given during campus orientation regarding MGC groups in contrast to the time spent discussing traditional organizations. This highlighted an important consideration in terms of equity within the Greek system. Devoting equal time and resources to increasing awareness of these organizations not only benefits the MGC organizations in terms of the number of students that may be interested in joining their fraternities or sororities, but also acts as an indicator of how valued they are within the greater Greek community, and as a result, the campus environment. One simple measure that institutions could take in response to this issue is ensuring that MGC, NPHC, IFC, and PC groups are given equal attention during campus orientation presentations. Second, presenters should have an understanding of the different councils and at least know the answers to basic questions regarding the councils.

Understandably training and resources for these presentations may be limited. If it is not possible for presenters to know this information, other options include providing a handout with common questions and answers about the councils or having more concrete sites and contacts to direct students to.

Increasing equity in Greek communities does not necessarily mean all organizations will engage in the same activities and will be given the same forms of support. Participants emphasized that multicultural organizations are very different in how they operate, including national guidelines they must abide by. In addition, the fact that these organizations do not have houses is another large distinction among the groups. Rather than try to incorporate MGC organizations in the same model as traditional organizations, recognizing their unique nature and approaching support in this light would be much more helpful. For instance, rather than have MGC organizations attend a house tour night, institutions could feature a separate event providing information about MGC organizations and how to get involved. Another step that Greek Life staff could take to increase equity is by ensuring that all pamphlets, flyers, websites, and other promotional material equally represent the councils.

Finally, Greek Life staff can take measures to enhance community and collaboration among the organizations. Notably, all participants described their organizations as being very different from traditional Greek organizations, sometimes even describing them as "different worlds" as Christina said. While there are a number of ways these organizations are different, they also share many commonalities. This strongly highlighted the need for cross-organizational education. This education should increase awareness of the different councils and organizational types. Perhaps increasing

awareness of similarities the organizations share as well as recognizing unique differences that distinguish the groups from one another could help the organizations to grow an understanding and appreciation of one another. In addition, few if any opportunities existed for organizations in all councils to interact with one another. Planning events such as a Greek meet and greet or other social events that encourage interaction among the members have the potential to contribute to a more positive Greek community.

Increasing Awareness

The challenges participants faced navigating a predominantly White institutional environment as well as the interactions they experienced with members of the community pointed to the need for increased awareness regarding racial dynamics on campus. This need was two-fold: to increase awareness of issues pertaining to equity and inclusion for the campus as a whole and also to better prepare racially minoritized individuals entering predominantly White institutions. In terms of the community as a whole, participants often discussed how they either felt ignored by White students on campus or had difficulty communicating with those individuals. Many also expressed frustration or disappointment that more members of the White community did not attend diversity or cultural centered events on campus. In general, participants expressed a disconnect between White students on campus and racially minoritized students. One consideration to help bridge this gap is to increase the extent to which campus communities have discussions concerning racial dynamics and the experiences of racially minoritized students in predominantly White settings. Providing opportunities for students to engage in these conversations and develop a sense of empathy for students that feel marginalized

in the campus community could be useful in developing more welcoming and overall inclusive environments. Luis explained that University B attempted to implement a diversity workshop for all incoming students for the first time. Although he was not certain of the extent that this initiative was effective, it was a step. Continuing to refine educational programs like these in terms of what works and what does not has the potential to leave a positive impression on the campus community.

From the participants' experiences transitioning to their institutions, it was clear that there was also a need for awareness of what racially minoritized students entering predominantly White settings will encounter. When it came to recruiting racially minoritized students to campus, participants from both universities commented that it often seemed like the institution's website and other promotional materials were, as Juan noted, "misleading." Photos featured through these platforms often depicted the universities to be much more diverse than they were in reality. While the participants recognized the importance of bringing in diverse students, this approach did not prepare incoming racially minoritized students for what they would experience at a predominantly White institution. Juan suggested bringing together students from racially minoritized groups into a "minority seminar class" to connect students to one another and support student transition. This could be an important consideration for institutions that do not currently offer first year seminars with cohorts of racially minoritized students. Other participants emphasized the importance of bridge programs or other opportunities in which they were brought together with other racially minoritized students. Regardless of the means, bringing these students together and providing information and support regarding the challenges they will face in a predominantly White institution could greatly

benefit students. Rather than avoid the issue, addressing it directly could better prepare students for what they will encounter and could help individuals avoid experiencing strong levels of cultural dissonance.

In addition, it is important for institutions to offer professional development and opportunities to disseminate information to raise awareness of faculty and staff member's roles in supporting students from racially minoritized groups and Latinxs specifically. While microsystems outside of academic settings were important in shaping Latinx student sense of belonging, academic spaces were also essential. Sensitivity to incidents that may spur feelings of marginalization as they did for Davina in her class is key. In that particular situation, Davina noted that she did not believe the professor intentionally made her feel uncomfortable, but regardless of the intentions the outcome was damaging to her sense of belonging. Another important takeaway for faculty and staff is to avoid relying on racially minoritized students to serve as representatives for all people of Color. If individuals volunteer information to class discussions that is their choice, but if they are being singled out to speak on behalf of the experiences of all racially minoritized people, this pressure may cause them to feel discomfort and lack a sense of belonging in that space. Finally, faculty and staff should be reminded of the difference that a single interaction can make for a student. There were many examples of occasions in which a faculty or staff member showed a participant they genuinely cared about their success and positively influenced their sense of belonging. Similarly, a single negative experience with an individual can leave a lasting impression, therefore faculty and staff should strive to treat all students with dignity and respect.

Multicultural Communities

Many of the participants reflected on their initial desire to find other Latinxs within the campus community, but found it difficult to do so until they were actually brought together with others. For instance, several of the participants attended the Latinx leadership event at University A and were able to make connections with other Latinx students, perhaps for the first time. For some, this was the first time they recalled feeling a sense of belonging at University A. Hosting similar events on campus would greatly benefit Latinx students in terms of facilitating the process of connecting them with other Latinxs and developing a sense of community within the university. In instances where campuses already host such events, ensuring that all students are aware of and have the opportunity to attend is an important consideration.

Particular areas on campus such as the Multicultural Center or TRIO SSSP Office were viewed by many of the participants as places of belonging because they offered opportunities for students to see many other racially minoritized individuals within one setting. Though TRIO programs are only available to a select number of students on campus, Multicultural Centers or Offices can serve an important role in whether racially minoritized individuals feel a sense of belonging on campus. While many institutions already have these in place on campus, many students are unaware of their purpose or take advantage of these spaces. Some participants described that they heard about these places through friends or others on campus, however making a stronger effort to increase awareness of these spaces would be useful in connecting students to spaces in which they see others that look like them and are in a place where their culture is recognized and valued.

Future Research

The purpose of this research was to explore the role of involvement in a particular university subculture, Latinx Greek letter organizations, in how Latinx college students develop and make meaning of their sense of belonging within PWIs. Untangling the experiences of participants in a number of microsystems, both on and off campus, provided an in-depth look at the critical role of context in this dynamic. Something that was clear based on participant discussion was that individuals described their perceived sense of belonging on the campus level in different ways, yet they all connected their belonging back to the communities within the institution that they were part of. Furthermore, regardless of whether they reported an overall sense of belonging, most participants still identified places on campus they did not feel they belonged within. Omi, for instance, asserted that she felt a sense of belonging at the institution as a whole because she was a student and everyone was there for the same purpose. Yet as Omi described particular places of belonging, she identified several openly accessible spaces on campus that she did not feel a sense of belonging in because she was a racially minoritized individual. Parsing out student sense of belonging at macro and micro levels is an important distinction because it calls attention to the question of whether particular areas of the university or even the university culture as a whole is inclusive and equitable. Therefore more qualitative work that further untangles the complexity of how various college students develop a sense of belonging is warranted. In cases like this, qualitative research is useful in filling gaps considering what sense of belonging even means to students, how elements of the institutional environment influence their perceived sense of belonging, and how institutions can more effectively and equitably serve all students.

This study also shed light on ways that climates for diversity played a role in participant sense of belonging at two public, predominantly White institutions. Participants at University A reflected on several incidents that occurred over the last couple of years that negatively shaped campus climate within the institution. In fact, all of the participants in this study that expressed they did not feel a sense of belonging within their university as a whole or that their institutional sense of belonging was murky were from University A. Considering the participant's stories, it was clear that the presidential election played a particularly salient role in this dynamic. Although participants were interviewed from both institutions during the election season, Trump's candidacy and election affected University A in a much more negative way in terms of participant experiences than at University B. This underscored how contextual nuances in campus climates in the midst of social change can influence Latinx student sense of belonging in different ways. Given that this study was limited to these two institutions, additional critical research is needed to further probe the role of campus climate in college student sense of belonging in light of campus contexts. In addition, research examining Latinx college student sense of belonging since the president took office would also be useful in exploring the extent to which issues were more of an immediate result of Trump's election as president or a lasting phenomenon.

As discussed in the limitations of this work, this particular study focused on Latinx student sense of belonging in order to limit the scope of the research to gain a clear understanding of how this dynamic manifests in Latinx student experiences. However the literature on campus subcultures also points to the need for research that examines sense of belonging in the experiences of all racially minoritized students.

Therefore future studies should also extend beyond the Latinx community to include additional populations. This would be particularly useful in unpacking the role of cultural identity in college student sense of belonging in relation to micro and macrosystems.

In addition, another intentional delimitation of this study meant that all of the participants were members of LGLOs. While these individuals were purposefully selected for what they could reveal concerning this particular phenomenon, the unique features of LGLOs may limit the transferability of the findings in this study to other types of subcultures. Future studies could explore the role of microsystems in relation to Latinx student sense of belonging outside of LGLOs. This may include students involved in other ethnic based organizations, non-ethnic based organizations, and those that are not members of any campus organizations. The latter option could be useful in terms of discovering if there are particular microsystems outside of organizational involvement that are especially useful to these students as they navigate college environments and experience a sense of belonging or lack thereof.

Finally, while this study provided insight to Latinx student experiences at large, public predominantly White institutions, future studies could explore how this unfolds in different institutional types. Studies still focused on predominantly White institutional settings could include other settings by size, selectivity, as well as private or for-profit institutions. Additionally, an exploration of student experiences in minority serving institutions such as Hispanic Serving Institutions or Historically Black Colleges and Universities could provide a deeper understanding of \ how these things manifest in different institutional settings.

Implications for Theory

As a particular subculture of the university, membership in the LGLOs served as a means to further examine the role of campus subcultures in Latinx sense of belonging in PWIs. The findings of this study underscored that membership in a campus subculture played a distinct role in Latinx college student experiences. While Strayhorn's (2012) definition of sense of belonging—"students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (p. 3)—points to the role of the greater campus in student sense of belonging as well as the role of individuals within the campus, it does not indicate the role of campus subcultures. Therefore I propose a revised version of Strayhorn's definition: the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community), *subculture (e.g. campus organization),* or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers). Specifically calling attention to the role of campus subcultures in college student sense of belonging may pave the way for future studies to explore the influence of these subcultures on college student experiences, which may provide us with a more nuanced understanding of how college students experience and develop a sense of belonging.

The findings of this study pointed to important implications for the role of ecological models in further examining the development of Latinx college student sense of belonging. One important implication for theory stemmed from the role of exosystems in participant sense of belonging. The emergence of this systemic level in relation to Latinx college student sense of belonging was significant because it showed that

microsystems the individual is not even part of can influence the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging in a given setting. Thus, models of Latinx sense of belonging should also include a consideration of variables that individuals do not necessarily come into direct contact with, but may indirectly affect their sense of belonging within a particular microsystem.

The primary implication for future development of theory regarding Latinx college student sense of belonging drawn from this study is the need to examine distinct settings within the university as individual microsystems in which individuals may form a sense of belonging as opposed to solely treating the university as one microsystem in which individuals may form a sense of belonging. Considering the institution in terms of the individual microsystems that make up the institutional environment is important for three essential reasons. First, the contextual nature of sense of belonging came to light in terms of participants' varied experiences from microsystem to microsystem. Individuals frequented places in which they experienced a sense of belonging or were among people with whom they felt a sense of belonging, perhaps even going so far as to visit a particular space daily. On the other hand, participants either avoided or simply did not intentionally go into spaces where they lacked a sense of belonging. Membership in the LGLOs connected participants to microsystems that all participants felt a sense of belonging within. By and large, these organizations embodied all of the characteristics of belonging, and as a result, all participants currently felt a sense of belonging within the macrosystem level of the organizations as well. The unique experiences participants had within each microsystem were contextually driven and affected their sense of belonging in different ways. Examining student sense of belonging in terms of the multiple

microsystems within a university shed light on contextual nuances that contributed to student sense of belonging.

Second, all participants tied their sense of overall belonging within the university in some regard to whether they found one or more communities to connect to and find a place of belonging within. As a result, even at the participants' institutional level of sense of belonging, microsystems played a critical role. Perhaps even more important were the differences in how participants described their institutional level of sense of belonging. Some individuals reflected that they did not feel a sense of belonging within the greater campus environment or that their sense of belonging was murky, but they did belong in one or more sub communities within the university. Two individuals noted that even though they believed they belonged in the campus as a whole, it did not really matter because they experienced a sense of belonging in their sub communities. Therefore while assessing whether individuals perceive a sense of belonging at the institutional level is still important, this level may not actually be the most important or meaningful part of the experience to Latinx students. In this light, it may be more telling to understand the development of an institutional sense of belonging beginning with micro levels.

The final and perhaps most important reason to consider microsystems in Latinx sense of belonging was the fact that many participants still reported experiencing a sense of belonging at the institutional level despite still lacking belonging in particular places or microsystems on campus. This shed light on the complexity of Latinx college student sense of belonging and the importance of examining macro and micro levels of belonging. Relying on whether students report a sense of belonging at the institutional level may overlook important information in terms of why they do not belong in certain

places on campus, which could indicate problematic areas in regard to equity and inclusivity within institutional environments.

Conclusion

This research explored the role of involvement in Latinx Greek letter organizations in how students experience and develop a sense of belonging in predominantly White institutions. Exploring this dynamic in light of the unique experiences of racially minoritized students and particularly Latinx students was important because as Juan stated, "it's a privilege to feel like you belong everywhere and you know that you can go anywhere and see people who look similar to you." The results of this study showed that all participants did indeed encounter particular settings in which they belonged as well as those in which they did not feel that they belonged. The characteristics of belonging: *where people look like me*, *where my racial identity or culture is recognized and valued*, *where I am valued and cared for*, *where I share interests or values with others*, and *where I have a role or responsibility* each played important roles in shaping whether participants felt a sense of belonging in a given microsystem. The findings of this study particularly showed the significance of the human aggregate environment in relation to these characteristics as well as the role of contextual nuances.

Based on the participants experiences, it was clear that campus subcultures played a critical role in Latinx sense of belonging. Some individuals only experienced a sense of belonging in particular microsystems, many of which stemmed from their involvement in LGLOs. Yet regardless of whether individuals reported a sense of belonging at the institutional level, all participants expressed that they would not feel a sense of belonging

at their respective university without being involved in the LGLO or a different sub-community within the institution. Paloma eloquently described the significance of being part of a sub-community within the university as follows:

> you want to be part of the communities where you feel welcomed at. You want to be part of the communities where you belong…it makes you have a home away from home. Like a home on campus…somewhere you can be yourself, somewhere you can express yourself however you want and people are still going to love you regardless. They're going to be there for you regardless.

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Appendix A: Staff Interview Protocol

1. What is your role at this institution?

1. How large is fraternity and sorority life here at (institution)?
2. How long have (LGLO organizations) been active on this campus?
3. What is the average size of the LGLO organizations on this campus?
4. How does the governance of fraternity and sorority life work here on campus? Do the organizations have individual council meetings?
5. Are there other organizations beyond LGLOs that fall under the (x council)?
6. Can you describe the fraternity and sorority culture here on campus?
    a. How visible is fraternity and sorority life here on campus? Does it play a large role?
    b. Are there any events or meetings on campus that bring together all branches of fraternity and sorority life?
    c. What is the community like among fraternity and sorority councils, particularly in relation to the multicultural Greek council? Do they generally work as individual councils or is there ever collaboration among the councils?
7. From your perspective, how are the Latinx Greek letter organizations perceived by other Greek students involved in NPC (National Panhellenic Conference), NPHC (National Pan-Hellenic Council), and IFC (Interfraternity Conference) organizations on campus?
8. From your perspective, how are the Latinx Greek letter organizations perceived by other non-Greek students on campus?

9. Are the LGLOs on this campus housed within a national umbrella organization such as NALFO?
    a. If so, how do the rules and mission of the national organization affect how the LGLOs operate on this campus?
10. Are there any policies or initiatives that have been implemented by the university that have affected how LGLOs operate on this campus?
    a. Please explain.
11. Are there rules in place set forth by fraternity and sorority life that LGLOs must abide by on campus?
12. Is there anything else you think I should know about LGLOs at (institution)?

Appendix B: Demographic Information Survey

1. Full Name
2. Chosen Pseudonym

   * This pseudonym is the name that will be used in place of your own in all research documents and reports. It is very important that you select a name that you are not connected to in any way and would not indicate your identity to readers. (Only a first name is necessary.)

3. Age
4. Gender
5. Race/Ethnicity
   - Mexican
   - Puerto Rican
   - Cuban
   - Argentinian
   - Columbian
   - Dominican
   - Nicaraguan
   - Salvadoran
   - Spaniard
   - Other_____
6. Name of university you currently attend

7. Are you the first of your immediate family members (parents or siblings) to attend college?
    - Yes
    - No
8. What was the approximate student enrollment size of your high school?
    - Less than 100
    - 100-200
    - 200-450
    - 450-1000
    - 1000-2000
    - 2000+
9. How would you describe the racial composition of your high school?
    - Predominantly made up of White students
    - Predominantly made up of Latinx students
    - Predominantly made up of other ethnic/racial minority students
    - An even mix of ethnic/racial minorities and White students
    - Other, please explain
10. Were you involved in campus organizations as a high school student?
    - Yes
    - No
    - If so, what types of organizations were you involved in during high school?
        - Academic
        - Athletic

- Performance arts
- Other_____

11. What is your major?
12. Where do you live?
    - On campus Greek housing
    - On campus residential hall
    - Off campus with family
    - Off campus with friends or roommates
    - Off campus alone
    - Other_____
13. How long have you been enrolled at your current university?
    - This is my first semester
    - This is my second semester
    - This is my third semester
    - This is my fourth semester
    - This is my fifth semester
    - This is my sixth semester
    - This is my seventh semester or more
14. Did you begin your college experience at your current institution?
    - Yes
    - No
15. If no, approximately how many credit hours did you complete prior to enrolling at your current institution?

- Where did you complete your previous college credit hours?
    - Dual credit program during high school
    - Community college after high school graduation
    - Another university after high school graduation
    - Other_____

16. How many credit hours are you currently enrolled in?
17. What is your current estimated GPA?
18. What is the name of your Latinx Greek letter organization?
19. Are you a member of other campus organizations?
    - What other organizations are you currently an active member of?
20. Have you held any leadership positions within your Greek organization or other campus organization? Please identify the leadership position title and the name of the organization

Appendix C: Student Interview Protocol 1

This first set of questions are really intended to understand what your experiences were like as you first began here at (x university) and became involved in (LGLO).

- Describe your experience starting at X university.
- How did you become involved in (LGLO)?
- What caused you to choose to join a Latinx Greek letter organization instead of other Greek, ethnically based, or general organization options?
    - Were there specific things that made the organization stand out in your mind such as the members' personalities, the values of the organization, the activities they engaged in, the organization's reputation?
- What stood out to you about the LGLO you chose over other LGLOs?

The next set of questions are meant to explore the extent that you feel a sense of belonging within the (institution) campus as a whole and also within (LGLO). So before beginning the next set of questions, I will give you a copy of the definition of the term sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group.

- Based on what I have just described, can you think of a time when you felt a sense of belonging within the greater campus community *when you started here* at x university?
    - What was it about the campus that made you feel that way?
    - Can you think of any other specific experiences you have had on campus that made you feel as if you belonged within this campus community?

- Can you think of a time when you felt as though you did not belong within the greater campus community *when you started here* at x university?
    - What was it about the campus that made you feel that way?
    - Can you think of any other specific experiences you have had on campus that made you feel as if you did not belong within this campus community?
- Thinking again about the meaning of sense of belonging provided earlier, can you think of a time when you felt a sense of belonging within your LGLO *when you first joined*?
    - What was it about the organization that made you feel that way?
    - Can you think of any other specific experiences you had within (LGLO) that made you feel as if you belonged within (LGLO)?
- Can you think of a time when you did not feel a sense of belonging within your LGLO *when you first joined*?
    - What was it about the organization that made you feel that way?
    - Can you think of any other specific experiences you had within (LGLO) that made you feel as if you did not belong within (LGLO)?
- Do you *currently* feel a sense of belonging within the greater campus community here at x university?
    - Probe: Are there specific aspects the campus that make you feel that way?
- Do you *currently* feel a sense of belonging within your LGLO?
    - Are there specific aspects of your organization that make you feel that way?

- Are there ways your sense of belonging (or lack of sense of belonging) within the greater campus affects your sense of belonging within (LGLO) or vice versa?

For our next interview, I want you to collect about ten pictures of places where you feel a sense of belonging and places that you do not. These places can include areas around your university such as classrooms, places to hang out on campus like the student center or union, a fraternity or sorority house or meeting room. They can also include off campus locations such as your work, home, a friend's house, anywhere that you feel as though you belong or do not belong. These do not have to be new pictures, they can be printed or you can also take them and bring them on a digital device such as a phone, tablet, laptop, or USB drive. During our next interview we will be discussing what it is about those places that cause you to feel a sense of belonging.

Appendix D: Student Interview Protocol 2

Last time we spoke I asked you to collect pictures of places where you feel a sense of belonging and places that you do not. Now during this interview we will be discussing what it is about those places that causes you to either feel a sense of belonging or not to feel a sense of belonging.

- So to begin, tell me about the first photo.
    - Why did you choose to bring a photo of this particular place?
    - How often would you say you are in this space?
- Are there particular aspects of the physical environment you can touch or see that causes you to feel like you do or do not belong? For example that could include the location's layout, artwork or statues, or even posters or flyers hanging in the area?
- Are there particular people within this setting that cause or prevent you from feeling a sense of belonging?
    - If so, what is it about those individuals that promote a sense of belonging? For instance, their physical appearances, behaviors, attitudes, beliefs?
- Have you always felt this way about this environment or have your perceptions changed over time?

As always, thank you for your time, during our next interview we will be discussing any other photos we did not have time to cover today and I will also be asking you some more specific questions about the campus environment here at (university), particularly in relation to the climate for racial and ethnic diversity.

Appendix E: Student Interview Protocol 3

So to begin we will discuss any remaining photos we were unable to discuss during the second interview and then we will be talking about the campus environment here at (university), particularly in relation to the climate for racial and ethnic diversity. So to begin, (see Appendix D).

We will now move on to the next set of questions focused on campus climate for racial and ethnic diversity within the greater campus community. This is really to gain an understanding of the extent that the institution reflects a sense of inclusion.

- To begin, do you believe the campus community as a whole here at (university) is accepting of individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds?
    - Are there specific reasons you feel that way?
    - How does that influence the extent that you feel a sense of belonging here at (university)?
- As a Latinx on campus here at (university), have you ever experienced any racially charged or discriminatory situations on campus that caused you to feel as if you did not belong here?
- Are there ways (university) celebrates racial/ethnic diversity and inclusion?
    - Do those initiatives cause you to feel a weaker or stronger sense of belonging to the greater campus community?

This second set of questions focuses on the role of (LGLO) in your experiences on campus.

- First, do you believe the campus community understands and accepts the purpose of ethnic based organizations such as Latinx Greek letter organizations?

- If you were to stop a random person on this campus and ask them to describe LGLOs here on campus, what do you think they would say?
- What role does Latinx culture play in (LGLO)?
    - How has that shaped your experiences as a college student?
- How do you believe your college experience would be different if you had not joined (LGLO)?
- In what ways do you believe your involvement in (LGLO) has influenced the degree that you feel a sense of belonging within the campus community?
- How important (if at all) is it to feel a sense of belonging to a subculture of a university such as a Latinx Greek letter organization?