

HOW LATINAS' VIEWS OF CAMPUS CLIMATE AND GENDER ROLE EXPECTATIONS
CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR PERSISTENCE AT A TWO-YEAR
HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

by

SUSAN E. LAIRD

B.A., Rockhurst University, 1992
M.B.A., University of Missouri at Kansas City, 2001

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

This qualitative case study with multiple participants explored how the perception of campus climate and gender role expectations contributes to Latinas' persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Midwest. Guided by the work of Hurtado and Carter (1997) and social support theory (Sarason & Sarason, 1985), various aspects of the college experience both inside and outside the classroom were examined. In-depth interviews were conducted in order to gain insight into those viewpoints that influenced the desire to enroll and persist in college and how these perspectives shaped commitment and sense of belonging to the institution. Prominent themes that emerged were: the significance of family support and the need to stay close, the impact of student identity and the importance of positive faculty-student interaction. The results indicated that immigration status, the desire to make family proud, and support from family and instructors that offered words of encouragement served to motivate students to persist and graduate. Additional prominent findings revealed that the perception regarding academic environment including the need for positive academic advising experiences, involvement in organizational memberships, particularly with the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) and activities that embrace the diverse student population and incorporate varying perspectives affect perceptions of campus climate and commitment to the institution. Participants identified those programs and services on campus that best serve the needs of Latinas and have the most impact on a positive college experience. The results contribute to the research addressing campus climate and sense of belonging for Latino/a students overall, and offers unique insights from the perspective of Latinas attending a two-year HSI that is lacking in the body of literature. Implications for practice and future research are identified.

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Major Professor
Linda P. Thurston

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Dedication

To my wonderful husband Loren. You are my rock. Now we have time to play. ☺

This is dedicated as well to my father and mother-in-law
who both passed away before seeing me graduate.

I would like to offer a special dedication to the memory of our son Jesse.

I hope that in some way, somehow, you know that I finished this thing and that you are proud of
your “favorite mother.” I feel honored to have had you in my life for as long as I did,
even though it was not long enough.

I miss you every day and will love you forever.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Hispanics are the fastest growing population in the United States, and represent the largest minority group at 17% of the total population (U.S. Census, 2012). Hispanics constitute one in four newborns, and one in five school children and as such, represent the youngest racial minority group in the country as well. This is the first time in our nation's history that one minority group comprises such a large percentage of our youngest citizens (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006). Along with this population growth, enrollment at institutions of higher learning is increasing; however, it is discouraging to note that when compared to African Americans and Caucasians, Hispanics in general still lag behind in degree completion (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Integrated Post Secondary Education Data System, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics, 2008b). Hispanic women in particular are faced with educational challenges unique to their gender as well as their culture (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Understanding those challenges, then finding ways in which to support these women's academic efforts can address ways in which to narrow this educational gap.

Whether or not an individual feels supported is helpful to any student attempting to succeed in academia (Kirby, Biever, Martinez, & Gomez, 2004; Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983), regardless if said support is offered from family members or education professionals at the institution in which the student is enrolled. Particularly with Hispanic women, initial involvement in higher education is commonly made possible with/by the support of family (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Once engaged in higher learning, additional support from administrators, faculty, and staff at the institution coupled with continued familial support is ideal. Student affairs professionals endeavoring to provide programs and services designed to offer this support in their efforts to recruit and retain these women need to continue to look for

ways in which to do so with cultural sensitivity. Acquiring this understanding or revisiting if already familiar and designing approaches with this information in mind will aid not only in institutional growth, but ultimately degree completion. Failure to familiarize or re-familiarize could very well result in the continuation of policies and procedures that will, at best, not adequately address the needs of this vital and growing population, or worse, consistently fail at efforts to engage them altogether.

Discussion in this chapter is organized in the following sections: (1) overview of the issues, (2) statement of the problem, (3) purpose of the study, (4) research questions, (5) significance of the study, and (6) summary.

Overview of the Issues

With numbers measuring 50.5 million (U.S. Census, 2010) Hispanics make up the largest minority population in this country. For the purpose of this research, Hispanics will heretofore be referred to as Latinos. The terms are oftentimes interchanged. Hispanic is the term used by the government when reporting population figures (Hurtado, 1992), but Latino is used most frequently in the Midwest, by researchers in general (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and also by myself.

In addition, because those who work at colleges and universities are all involved to some degree with recruitment and retention, whether they be administrators, faculty or staff, the terms “student affairs professionals,” “higher education professionals,” and “education professionals” are all used interchangeably in this document.

Although Latinos are growing in numbers and they are gaining more access to higher education, the percentage obtaining college degrees are not keeping pace. Even though progress has been made in the last thirty years in terms of enrollment (Fry, 2005), it is discouraging to

note that when compared to African American and Caucasian counterparts, Latinos still lag behind in degree completion (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004).

Even though Latino enrollment in college has increased significantly, it is the women (Latinas) who have made the most strides. The participation of women overall in higher education has increased dramatically in the past 30 years (Rayle, Arredondo, & Kurpius, 2005), and Latinas are no exception. Recent enrollment statistics (U.S. Census, 2009) show that women comprise 53.3 % of enrollment at four-year colleges and universities, and 56.7% of enrollment at two-year institutions. Of those women, Latinas comprise 5.8% of enrollment at four-year colleges and universities, (10.9% of total female enrollment) and 9% of enrollment at two-year institutions (15.8% of total female enrollment). Even though Latinas have made strides in educational obtainment, their graduation rates are still lower than their female Caucasian counterparts (Integrated Post Secondary Education Data System, 2005; National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2007). Statistics show that women of color, although meeting with additional success and outperforming men, still face severe challenges to adjustment and retention (and subsequent graduation) from college than do their female Caucasian counterparts. (Rayle et al., 2005).

Despite their increase in numbers, compared with men, women in general face greater psychosocial disadvantages in their educational pursuits and report higher levels of academic stress (Rayle et al., 2005). Women also report lower educational self-efficacy than their male counterparts (Bandura, 1977 & 1997), which means simply that they question whether or not they can complete specific educational tasks successfully. In addition, oftentimes women suffer from low self-esteem and academic confidence, experience higher stress, and perceive a lack of support for their educational endeavors. (Rayle et al., 2005).

Participation in higher education, for women in general, and Latinas in particular, is commonly made possible with/by the support of family. Whether or not this support is offered may contribute to the attrition of many Latinas pursuing a college degree—especially those who have multiple responsibilities and therefore may struggle more with educational demands. It is this support from family members—or the absence of it—whether perceived or otherwise, coupled with the support offered by the institution via campus climate and how they affect enrollment and persistence that is the primary focus of this paper.

Women in general take on the role of caregiver of the family (Gilligan, 1982 & 1993), and in the Latino community, the woman as caregiver is entrenched in the culture (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008; Kanellos & Esteva-Fabregat, 1984; Mayo & Resnick, 1996). In the Latino culture, the idealized traditional feminine role calls for women to be submissive, chaste, and dependent, while the masculine role is defined by dominance, virility, and independence (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). It can be surmised that a Latina will not even *enroll* in college if she does not feel supported by the family unit and/or man of the household. Whether or not this support is felt has an impact not only on college enrollment, but attrition as well. Support from family, together with the support of the institution can have a positive or negative impact on the Latina student (Rayle et al., 2005).

In the Latino community there is a higher percentage of so-called traditional households when a man (father, guardian or significant other) is present in the family unit (Arciniega et al., 2008). For purposes of this study, a traditional household is defined as one in which the man takes a dominant role in making decisions. Further, in a traditional household, the man generally holds to a stereotypical approach to gender roles; i.e., the man as breadwinner, and the woman contributing to the family unit by providing a paycheck if unmarried and if married, serving as

wife and mother. When a woman fulfills her role, her responsibilities may hold little room for outside endeavors or “interests” such as obtaining a college degree.

For those women who do pursue a college education, the support received from family fosters persistence through the promotion of academic competence, self-sufficiency and relatedness (Rayle et al., 2005). Social support received from various sources is advantageous for enabling an individual to persevere through trying conditions (Sarason et al., 1983), and therefore proves beneficial when received outside the family as well. Put simply, social support, whether given freely or grudgingly, can make a difference to those receiving it regardless of the source (Kirby et al., 2004). In some cases, the mere suggestion of support (or absence of interference) can have equally positive effects (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007). It is the *perception* of support that can make all the difference (Heiman, 2004; Kirby et al., 2004; Rayle et al., 2005).

Whether or not one feels that they have received support is individualized; therefore the way in which one person defines support may differ from another. Perceived support is a subjective perception whereas one individual believes that another has provided emotional assistance. It is necessary for educators to study perceived support in terms of college enrollment and persistence so that they may enhance recruiting approaches to increase enrollment and better understand a student’s departure from or persistence in college once enrolled. Understanding the Latino culture in order to best meet the needs of Latinas pursuing a college education will aid in increasing the chances of their academic success and obtaining a degree. Specifically, learning how an institution may complement the support provided by family—or provide an adequate amount of support if familial support is absent—is worthy of study and will aid in meeting the unique needs of Latinas, given the importance they place on family.

Statement of the Problem

The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) reported that over one-third of Latinos (37.2%) are under the age of 18, and as stated previously, the Latino growth rate is expected to continue. With increasing numbers of Latino/as graduating from high school and enrolling in colleges and universities, it is becoming clear that many institutions of higher learning have been ill-prepared in their approach to help Latino/a students meet with academic success (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2005). It is therefore important for educators and student affairs professionals to understand the many complex cultural issues unique to this population that influence college enrollment and persistence if they hope to recruit and retain these students once admitted.

Latino/as have accounted for much of the growth in recent college enrollment (Fry, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009), but the challenges they face and the path taken in their academic pursuits oftentimes differs significantly from that of their counterparts. Almost half of Latino/as enrolling in college begins their college career on community college campuses (Santiago & Brown, 2004), and less than 20% of these students transfer to a four-year institution and complete their bachelor's degree (Fry, 2005). The National Center for Education Statistics reported that of the most recently studied group of college students (2005) that attempted bachelor's degrees, 58.1% of non-Hispanic Caucasian students completed their degree within 6 years of entering college, while only 45.7% of Latino/as obtained their degree within the same amount of time.

Although researchers have focused on several variables associated with Latino/a attrition, including a lack of financial resources (Heller, 2001; Jackson, 1990; Johnstone, 2005; St. John, 1990; Tierney, 1999; Tinto, 1988), inadequate academic preparedness, (Perna & Titus, 2005;

Saunders & Serna, 2004; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002), and institutional and personal racism (Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993)—few studies have focused on understanding the impact of family combined with institutional support on enrollment and persistence. Student affairs professionals need to develop a greater understanding as to why some Latino/a students enroll and persist in college in spite of the challenges they face, and the roll that support (or perceived support) plays.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how perceived support from both family and higher education professionals affects undergraduate Latina students' decision to attend and persist in college. I wished to gain a better understanding of the issues that influence Latinas' decisions to enroll, persist, and graduate college, as well as the challenges that they face while pursuing their degree. Understanding their unique needs and applying that knowledge will be useful for planning and implementing programs and services to meet those needs.

Tinto's Theory of College Student Departure (1987, 1993) is the most well-known and commonly referred to model of student persistence. The theory holds that persistence is heavily influenced by the degree of academic and social integration enjoyed by the student, and that there are three stages of development: separation, transition, and incorporation. Tinto's (1993) theory has been criticized for taking a White-dominated mainstream approach that is not necessarily applicable for Latino/a students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). In order to better understand the issues surrounding enrollment and persistence of Latinas pursuing an undergraduate college degree, I utilized Hurtado and Carter's (1997) work regarding sense of belonging as a theoretical framework, rather than Tinto's theory of student departure. Hurtado and Carter's approach not only factors in the effect that campus climate has on a sense of

belonging and therefore persistence, but speaks more to the underrepresented student experience. Social support theory (Sarason & Sarason, 1985) was utilized as well in order to understand the importance that social support has on persistence. The research questions guiding the study centered on these two theories and will be discussed in further detail below.

Research Questions

Research Questions that were utilized in this study addressed how Latina students perceive the effects of familial support to college enrollment and persistence and how Latina students perceive the effects of institutional support to attend college through graduation. The primary research question was:

What are the factors that contribute to enrollment sustainability and completion of a degree at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution for Latinas?

Hurtado and Carter (1997) attempted to assess the effectiveness of student participation in a variety of academic and social activities as well as membership in various communities within the college environment in order to understand which activities and memberships contributed to feelings of ‘fitting in’ to college life. Specifically, their work examined how students’ transitional experiences and perception of campus racial climate influenced their sense of belonging. A set of research questions addressed each of the issues that influence a sense of belonging and a set of sub-questions were posed to ascertain the overall sense of belonging. The first of the guiding sub-questions spoke to the first component: *Ease of Transition*. Hurtado and Carter maintained that there are three elements that help students’ transition to college life: managing resources, separation and maintenance of family ties and cognitive mapping, or “getting to know”.

The next guiding sub-question spoke to the second issue in sense of belonging: *Perception of Campus Climate*. Hurtado (2007) defined campus climate as “a measure—real or perceived—of the campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions” (p. 1). Social support theory, as it relates to education and persistence, address the practices of social integration or supportive resources—or the absence of them—that factor into students’ decisions to persist or drop out of college. These resources can take the form of emotional encouragement or offer support through companionship, or a sense of belonging. Hurtado and Carter maintained that it is much more difficult for students to feel a sense of belonging if they experience discrimination, exclusion or racial tension or conflict.

The next of the guiding sub-questions spoke to a *Sense of Belonging*. Hurtado and Carter argued that, “studying a sense of belonging allows researchers to assess which forms of social interaction (academic and social) further enhance students’ affiliation and identity with their colleges” (p. 328). Individual perceptions of a welcoming environment on campus have an influence on students’ commitment to the institution and subsequently their desire to graduate.

Lastly, questions that integrate social theory as it relates to Latinas’ sense of belonging and perceptions of gender roles were posed.

The primary research question was: ***What are the factors that contribute to enrollment sustainability and completion of a degree at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution for Latinas?***

Ease of Transition

- 1. What personal factors have changed or evolved since the transition from enrollment to persistence for Latinas?***

Campus climate

2. *What personal factors influence Latina's perception of a welcoming environment on campus?*
3. *What institutional factors influence Latina's perception of a welcoming environment on campus?*

Sense of Belonging

4. *How do Latinas perceive their academic experiences outside of class?*
5. *How does membership in religious or social organizations influence a sense of belonging at the institution?*

Gender Role Expectations

6. *How do perceived gender role expectations impact Latina's decisions to persist in college?*

Significance of the Study

Because the Latino population is growing and subsequently colleges and universities are seeing an increase in Latina enrollment, more research is needed to ensure that education professionals at these institutions develop and/or strengthen strategies to recruit and retain them.

Potential outcomes of this study could provide institutions of higher learning with information concerning the issues that Latinas face while pursuing a college degree. This information could then be used to improve the design and implementation of culturally sensitive programs and services that focus on the factors that influence Latinas' decision to enroll and persist in obtaining a college degree. These results, it is hoped, will be beneficial for higher education professionals when interacting with Latina students and thereby aid in their retention

and subsequent academic success. It is anticipated that the findings will provide insight and therefore aid in the design of solutions for recruiting and retaining Latina students not only at the campus under study but might benefit professionals in student affairs positions who work with Latina student recruitment and retention at other campuses (González, 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Summary

It is necessary for educators to study Latinas' perceived familial and institutional support in terms of college enrollment and persistence so that they may enhance recruiting techniques and better comprehend a student's departure from or persistence in college once admitted. With an increased understanding, programs and services that speak to the unique needs of Latina students can be designed and implemented, thereby increasing the chances of persistence and degree completion.

An extensive discussion of the literature review will follow in Chapter Two, which will highlight the importance of perceived support as it relates to a Latina's decision to attend and persist in college. Chapter Three will describe the methodology for the research in greater detail; Chapter Four will discuss the results of the study; and Chapter Five will interpret these results, and provide an overview of the implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter discusses the literature related to Latino/as in higher education in general, and the perceptions of Latinas' gender role expectations and the effect of familial and institutional support on their enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education specifically.

To fully understand the lived experiences of Latinas' decision to enroll and pursue a degree at Great Plains Community College (GPCC), the study was framed utilizing Hurtado and Carter's (1997) work regarding students' sense of belonging, along with social support theory.

The chapter will first provide a brief overview of Tinto's theory of student departure (1987, 1993) and its criticisms, followed by the work of Hurtado and Carter's (1997) sense of belonging model and its components (e.g., campus climate and academic and social participation). Social support theory will then be defined and discussed along with the effects of perceived support; the importance of family and religion; and gender role perceptions and its effects. Lastly, in order to gain a contextual understanding of the participants and institution under study, research regarding Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) will be highlighted, along with an overview of the role of community colleges and challenges faced by students enrolled at these institutions.

Tinto's Theory of Student Departure

One of the most widely studied areas in higher education is student retention, and the most well known and commonly referred to model of persistence is Tinto's Theory of Student Departure (1987, 1993). Its cornerstone rests in understanding the two areas in students' lives that they are most affected by: the academic realm and the social realm. The theory posits that persistence is heavily influenced by the degree of academic and social integration enjoyed by the student. Tinto outlined the importance of bonding with the new college culture as a means to

support persistence and subsequent degree completion. He applied three stages that students must undergo: *separation*, *transition*, and *incorporation* (Tinto, 1986, p. 141). To begin the process of integration, Tinto argued that students must first separate from their families and former communities, after which transition occurs leading students to form a new academic identity. Lastly, in the incorporation stage, interaction with individuals within the college community allows students to integrate and share new norms, values and beliefs. Students who choose not to incorporate, or fail to do so, ultimately do not persist (Tinto, 1986).

Although Tinto's theory of student departure has had a major impact on other researcher's theories about student success and persistence (Tierney, 1999), it has been criticized as being biased because it does not address or explain persistence or departure specifically among students of color (Attinasi, 1989; Tierney, 1992, 1999). Other critics of Tinto's theory (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendón et al., 2000; Tierney, 1992) argued that the social identity of racial/ethnic minority students should not be supplanted in favor of integration into the dominant culture or norms of an institution because their social identities are an important aspect of their lives. In fact, Tierney (1992) argued that for minority students to sever ties with precollege cultures, it is the equivalent of committing "cultural suicide."

Others have criticized Tinto's theory of student departure as well because it places a disproportionate share of the burden for adjustment success on the student rather than the institution (Stanton-Salazaar, 1997, 2001; Tierney, 1992, 1999) and because it fails, in part, to take into account the unique needs/challenges of minority students attending college at two-year institutions (Bensimon, 2007).

Sense of Belonging

Given that Tinto's research focused on "mainstream" (i.e., full-time, White) college students, Hurtado and Carter (1997) argued that Tinto's view of integration did not take into account the needs and requirements for success for students of color in general or Latino/a students in particular. To make up for this shortfall, they proposed the concept of *sense of belonging*, which "captures the individual's view of whether she or he feels included in the college community" (p. 327). With this concept, they offered that student success is influenced in part to the extent in which they feel welcomed on campus.

This notion not only sounds logical, but it is grounded in psychology. Baumeister and Leary (1995) pointed out that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation and therefore has a powerful influence on behavior. Students develop a psychological attachment to the college community when they find ways of becoming active both socially and academically in campus life, thereby forming a connection. This attachment, or 'sense of belonging' is important in order to achieve student commitment and persistence (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009; Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Other educational researchers agreed with Hurtado and Carter's view, and offered studies that showed that for minority students in particular, a sense of belonging is crucial (Just, 1999; Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003; Zea, Reisen, Beil, & Caplan, 1997). Further, for students who do not feel a sense of belonging, the chances of dropping out altogether increase (Just, 1999; Swail et al., 2003; Zea et al., 1997; Zepke, Leach, & Prebble, 2006).

Hurtado and Carter (1997) pointed out that in order for students to feel comfortable on campus, (i.e., feel a sense of belonging), the overall atmosphere, or campus climate, must be

welcoming; this, in turn, will foster success as students become more involved socially and academically.

Campus Climate

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen and Allen (1998, 1999) identified campus climate as crucial to the persistence and attrition of minority students. Campus climate is a multidimensional phenomenon, they maintained, and is influenced by several external and internal factors: (e.g., the offering of programs and services designed to meet student needs, the historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, and the psychological and behavioral climate on campus). Students will feel a higher sense of inclusiveness and ultimately a higher sense of belonging if they perceive the campus climate as positive. Conversely, if there is a perception of prejudice and/or discrimination directed at them or others, students will feel that the campus climate is hostile, which negatively impacts their sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Just, 1999; Smedley et al., 1993).

Connecting with other students on campus from different racial/ethnic groups can influence Latino/as perceptions of the campus racial climate as well (Hurtado et al., 1998; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). In fact, in a study conducted by Johnson et al., (2007), it was found that Latino/a students were the only racial/ethnic group for which interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds was significantly related to their sense of belonging.

Interactions can take place in the academic or social realm, which leads to an integration into the campus community. Educational researchers addressing persistence and retention reported that student involvement in the academic and social activities offered on college campuses were crucial for student success (Metz, 2005; Pantegas & Creedon, 1978; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Academic and Social Participation

Academic and social participation can be gained in a variety of ways, and can all contribute to a stronger sense of belonging. Hurtado and Carter (1997) pointed out that discussions of course content with fellow students outside the classroom, along with membership in religious and/or social organizations are some of the ways in which students can interact and subsequently benefit from campus life.

Interacting with others on campus can help students feel more supported as they attempt to navigate complex academic and social environments. Nora and Cabrera (1996) found that encouragement from fellow students supported students' social assimilation, and Braxton, Milem and Sullivan (2000) pointed out that incorporating social activities could be important for student retention.

Participation is an important element of college life. For Latino/a students, attending college may require them to leave their family and/or social support, and if so, they may already feel a sense of separation. Those that do not make a connection with those on campus may be left to feel isolated and thereby unsupported.

Membership in Social Organizations

Hurtado and Carter (1997) reported that early membership in social community organizations had a positive effect on students' sense of belonging, as did memberships in religious clubs, student government organizations and sports teams or clubs. Interestingly, however, they did not find that students who held memberships in ethnic student organizations experienced a higher sense of belonging. They presupposed that such membership provided a platform in which to share common problems and therefore simply allowed participants to experience "group cohesion and marginality simultaneously."

Pascarella and Terenzini, (1980) concurred that early membership is beneficial because of the social support received. The level of students' social interaction, they maintained, particularly during the first two years is crucial to the decision to stay or leave.

Social Support Theory

Social support theorists hold that social support, or the notion that one is cared for by others, is beneficial to one's health and mental well-being (Williams & Barclay, 2004; Schlossberg, 1989). The benefits associated with social support are realized regardless whether the support is actual or merely perceived. Support can be offered by way of emotional support, tangible/financial support, or support can be informational in nature (Lucas, Blazek, & Riley, 2005; Williams & Barclay, 2004; Woolfolk, Winne, & Perry, 2006).

Jackson, Soderlind and Weiss (2000) found that college students who reported low levels of social support experienced later feelings of loneliness that oftentimes affected academic persistence. It is interesting to note that support can be beneficial to men or women, even if there is merely a perception that support is offered; however, Deaux and LaFrance (1998) claimed that women are primed from an early age for social relationships and as a result desire and actually *need* social relationships more than men.

Effects of Perceived Support

As previously addressed, there are several forms of social support and all are beneficial no matter the source. Social support can be offered verbally, emotionally, through action or behavior, or any combination thereof (Lucas et al., 2005; Williams & Barclay, 2004; Woolfolk et al., 2006). Additionally, social support has a positive effect on college persistence (Gloria, Robinson Kurpius, Gloria, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999; Mallinckrodt, 1988; Robinson Kurpius,

2001), especially for women (Kirby et al., 2004) and first-year students (Polewchak, 2002; Sand, Robinson Kurpius, & Dixon Rayle, 2004).

In some cases, the mere suggestion of support (or absence of interference) can have equally positive effects. It is the *perception* of support that can make all the difference. For instance, for those nontraditional women returning to college or attending college for the first time, social support can have a significant impact on the formation of various coping strategies (Heiman, 2004), and can play a pivotal role in reducing stress (Kirby et al., 2004).

Social support also has the effect of making life more manageable as well as understandable for those who receive it. Kirby et al., (2004) noted that measures of social support could actually increase the chances that a person will seek out additional support and resources that can contribute to handling stress. Additionally, Rayle et al. (2005) argued that women who attend college that received social support not only experienced lower levels of academic stress, but they had healthier perspectives of self as well.

Although support from any source is important, support from family oftentimes has the most impact. Family support is arguably important to all students, but it is especially important for minority groups (Alire, 1997; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). Parental support, along with involvement, is linked to increased college ambitions and enrollment (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Horn, 2006; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Perna, 2000), to college preparedness (Muller, 1993; Perna & Titus, 2005; Zick, Bryant, & Osterbacka, 2001); and to adjustment with and success in the academic setting (Heiman, 2004). Students who have a perception of parental support have higher GPAs and are less likely to withdraw from college (Walker & Satterwhite, 2002).

Importance of Family

In many if not most minority groups the relationship with and view of family is one of the most important cultural characteristics. “Family is so important to minority students,” Alire (1997) maintained, “because it helps...[them] develop and maintain self-esteem and self-confidence and to maintain their identity....Motivation for minority students is most often rooted in the culture of their families” (p. 27).

For Latino/as, family provides a cultural connection to the past, a lens in which to view the present, a perspective for the future, and an overall sense of community (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Children are raised to respect and maintain close family ties. They generally grow up with the support and guidance from parents and extended family and this support does not wane simply because they grow older. Because the men in the family are oftentimes culturally conditioned to look after their female relatives, Latinas in particular continue to receive support and guidance from their parents specifically even after reaching the age of maturity (Alire, 1997; Nora & Ramirez, 2006).

When looking at the importance of family in relation to academia, family plays a pivotal role in helping Latino/a students prepare for college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999; Lee, 1993; Muller, 1993; Perna, 2000; Zick et al., 2001) and persist once enrolled (Benítez & DeAro, 2004; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Hurtado and Carter (1997) pointed out that Latino/a students who maintain close supportive relationships with family may be better adjusted to college life.

It can be said that in the Latino community, if parents encourage and support their daughter’s goal of receiving a college education, it may have an impact on her decision to attend college. Those Latinas who receive support and encouragement from parents, even as adults, and

know that parents have high expectations for them, are more likely to persist in school, due to the fact that it can foster self-confidence (Rayle et al., 2005).

Although parents can take a primary and crucial position in encouraging their children to attend college, research indicates that Latino/a students can and do benefit from others as well, particularly other family members. The experience of older siblings regarding college choice can be quite influential, especially if their siblings have attended college themselves (Ceja, 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008; Rosas & Hamrick, 2002; Stoner & Jovel, 2003). Research also shows that Latino/as oftentimes consider going to colleges located closer to home in order to be closer to family (Tornatzky, Lee, Majia, & Tarant, 2003).

Gender Role Perceptions and its Effects on Academia

Gender role stereotypes affect not only how individuals are viewed by others, but also how individuals see themselves (Hoffman, Powlishta, & White, 2004). Gender role socialization, rather than merely a fixed biological system, is an arbitrary distinction that socializes men toward dominance and women toward dependence (Foels & Pappas, 2004). Gender role recognition happens early in life. By the age of 3, boys show that they are already aware of traditional male roles, and girls appear to be cognizant of the roles of both genders (O'Brien et al., 2000).

Women most generally are the caretakers within the family (Gilligan, 1982; Joseph, 2012), and this view is entrenched in the Latino culture (Ginorio & Huston, 2001). There are very specific gender role and expectations for women within the Latino community, which can be an impediment for Latinas who wish to receive a college education. Ginorio and Huston (2001) pointed out that, “many families emphasize or highly esteem traditional roles for women as wives and mothers,” and further stated, “[Latino] gender roles...are extremely restrictive;

many traditional adults question the value of any education for women” (p. 24). In fact, Kerr and Sodano (2003) stated that one of the most commonly cited obstacles to educational success for Latinas is the issue of role conflicts. This oftentimes manifests itself as a struggle, or “tug of war” between familial/social responsibilities and the desire to succeed academically. Hammer, Grigsby and Woods argued, “fulfilling the demands of one role is made more difficult by requirements of the other role” (1998). In essence, women in general and Latinas in particular attending college still generally take the time needed to see to the needs of family and children, with matters affecting their friends, and work concerns. Until they find a way to balance all of these interests/responsibilities, it could very well be that their studies will be the first to suffer.

Additionally, studies have shown that women have lower academic self-confidence than do men (Hurtado, 1994), and given this fact, coupled with familial and work responsibilities on top of educational ones, it is perhaps no wonder that women report suffering from higher amounts of academic stress than do men (Heiman, 2004). In the best of situations, college students perceive the demands placed on them in college as stressful, and report experiencing emotional reactions to this stress. With women, this stress can be exacerbated by self-imposed expectations as well as external pressures (Heiman, 2004).

Latinas not only have to deal with multiple responsibilities placed upon them, but oftentimes face opposition within their own community and even their immediate family when announcing that they wish to attend college. Some of the more subtle forms of disapproval include comments such as, “you do your homework *after* you finish cleaning the house,” and “you don’t need to work so hard, men don’t like smart girls” (Morales, 2008, p. 203). Although most of these comments come from fathers or surrogate fathers or significant others, to a lesser degree mothers and female friends reportedly make similar comments as well. In many cases it

wasn't that the ones making the comments didn't want these women to do well in school...it was just that school was not supposed to get in the way of their traditional roles. Morales (2008) found that those women who were academically successful went through periods where, "they were forced to acknowledge, refute, and ultimately dismiss" the comments (p. 203). According to Villenas and Moreno (2001), Latina mothers sometimes may deliver mixed messages to their daughters regarding education as well. On the one hand, they may outline a need to be self-sufficient, but yet be subservient to their families' needs, with an importance placed on becoming *mujeres de hogar* (women of the home). Even if mothers support their daughters' academic aspirations, they may feel intense economic pressures, thereby necessitating the need for the daughter/student to find work to help support the family and/or contribute to the family unit by caring for younger siblings (Cammarota, 2004). It can be difficult for a Latina attending college when told that although school is important, the primary focus must be caring for the family.

Perhaps it is no wonder that although academic success is increasing among Latinas, they experience a higher attrition rate than females from other racial and ethnic groups (Cammarota, 2004) taking all the above into consideration.

Contextual framework: Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) and community colleges. In order to provide a greater understanding of the participants for this proposed study, which took place at Great Plains Community College (GPCC), a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Midwest, a definition of and subsequent dialogue regarding Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) will be offered, followed by a discussion concerning the role of community colleges.

Hispanic serving institution (HSI). According to the federal government, HSIs are defined as colleges and universities that have more than 25% full-time Hispanic students

enrolled (Benítez & DeAro, 2004). Congress first recognized HSIs as an institutional type in 1992 as a result of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (Gándara, 1995; Laden, 2001b).

Of all postsecondary institutions, approximately 6% have an HSI designation (Perrakis & Hagedorn, 2010). The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) is the only recognized association that concerns itself with advocacy for HSIs at the local, state, and federal level. HACU identifies 242 HSIs, while other sources identify only 193 (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2006). Perrakis and Hagedorn (2010) suggested that the difference may lie in a growing number of institutions that meet HSI criteria or may also reflect the differences in methods of accounting for HSIs.

Several community colleges in recent years have become HSIs due to their mission to serve local residents and the growth of the Latino population (Guzmán, 2001; Laden, 1999, 2004). More than half of HSIs are community colleges, and 93% are public institutions with open-door policies (Santiago, 2008); and as a result of open admission education professionals find that many of their students are ill-prepared to succeed in college-level classes (Tovar & Simon, 2006). In addition, nearly half of all HSIs are located in Texas and California, which is easily explained given the close proximity to the Mexican border and Latinos' established historical roots in these areas (Laden, 2004).

Although four-year HSIs graduate Latino/a students in proportion to the representation of students on campus, the same cannot be said for two-year HSIs where Latino/as are significantly underrepresented among earners of associate's degrees and certificates (38% vs. 42% respectively) as compared to their representation on campus (Gastic & Gonzalez-Nieto, 2010).

Further, according to Gastic and Gonzalez-Nieto, (2010), these gaps are more pronounced at public two-year HSIs.

One might expect that any given HSI would have programs and services in place designed specifically to address the needs of the Latino/a student population, but this is not always necessarily the case (Contreras & Bensimon, 2005; Lane & Brown, 2003). Many HSIs and minority serving institutions face financial difficulties and report understaffed and/or underfunded campuses (Hubbard & Stage, 2005), which might very well result in cutting back on programs and services already in place or a delay in the design and offering of new ones. In addition, merely because there are high percentages of Latino/a students on a given HSI campus does not guarantee that their needs will be met if different than the needs of others, whether the reasons are financial or other (Meeuwisse, Severiens, & Born, 2010). Further, in a study conducted by Read, Archer and Leathwood (2003), it was reported that simply having other students who are a similar age, class, gender or ethnicity is not always enough/adequate to make them feel comfortable, or that they feel they 'fit in' on campus.

Although some question the extent to which HSIs are intentionally promoting the success of Latino/a students, there are some indicators that Latino/a students are enjoying more positive experiences and outcomes than are those not attending HSI institutions (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008). Successful HSIs do, in fact, align academic programs with student support services to provide accommodating environments conducive to student success (Gastic & Gonzalez-Nieto, 2010), which contributes to a sense of belonging and connectedness to the institution (Maestas, Vaquera, & Zehr, 2007). It should be noted, however, that this is difficult to cultivate among part-time and commuter students.

In a study focusing on HSIs, Santiago (2007) reported that the classification of a campus as an HSI shows no evidence of influencing student college choices. However, most HSIs have institutional characteristics that align with Latino/a student priorities and needs and may therefore explain why so many students choose HSIs. For example, many Latino/a students at HSIs list as priorities for choosing a college low college costs, proximity to where they lived and an approachable campus. In tandem with student priorities, HSIs are generally less expensive than other institutions, are located in large Latino communities, and tend to be more accessible compared to other institutions. (p.3).

Community colleges. Latino/a college students tend to begin their academic journeys at colleges with open-door policies (Pew Hispanic Center, 2004) and because most community colleges have such policies, oftentimes Latino/a students enroll at these institutions. Among 2003-2004 high school graduates, 46% of Latino students enrolled in community colleges directly after high school, compared to 28% White, 30% African American, and 25% of Asian American students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008b). Nearly half (46%) of the entire Latino/a student population is enrolled in HSIs (Johnson, Conrad, & Perna, 2006; Mercer & Stedman, 2008).

Community colleges are key entrance points for many of our nation's underrepresented students, and as such, student affairs professionals on campus struggle with attrition for a variety of reasons (Tovar & Simon, 2006). Most administrators at community colleges state that improving student retention is one of their highest priorities, however, oftentimes programs and services are designed to meet the needs of the traditional college student (Benítez & DeAro, 2004). Traditional college students are enrolled full-time, live on campus, enter college upon completion of high school, are financially dependent on their parents, and have few work or

family obligations. Now only about 40% of total students enrolled fit that description (Choy, 2002). It could be easily argued that student retention strategies based on the traditional model are inappropriate, given that 69% of students who attend community colleges with an HSI designation attend part-time (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Because these students have work and family obligations in addition to their educational aspirations, retention strategies must be tailored to fit their needs.

Almost half (46%) of HSIs are community colleges (Mercer & Stedman, 2008). As with other community colleges across the country, HSIs are seeing increased enrollment and several more are expected to reach HSI status in the coming years (Santiago & Andrade, 2010). Approximately 80% of community colleges with an HSI designation are found in urban areas, with the remainder located in rural areas or small towns. The vast majority (87%), are public schools with an open-door policy and have flexible course schedules for part-time students with work or family responsibilities (Benítez & DeAro, 2004). With over 1,000 community colleges in this country, these institutions hold approximately 35% of all college students (Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011).

Community colleges appeal to Latino/as for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to the fact that they are located in close proximity to home; as a rule have smaller classes and flexible admissions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Laden, 2001) and; tuition costs are lower than at four-year institutions, which is appealing to Latino/as given that they are generally more adverse to taking out student loans than are other groups (Dowd, 2008). In addition, community colleges also tend to offer programs and services that address the needs of students from underrepresented and nontraditional backgrounds (Laden, 2001). When taking into account all of

the above, it is perhaps not surprising that for Latino/as, community colleges and HSIs serve as critical gateways for higher education.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the effects of familial and institutional perceived support on Latinas' decisions to attend and persist at Great Plains Community College (GPCC). The research focused specifically on exploring how perceived support from family, administrators, faculty, and staff at the institution affected seven undergraduate traditional Latina students' decision to attend and persist in college. The overriding research question that guided this study was:

What are the factors that contribute to enrollment sustainability and completion of a degree at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) for Latinas?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework utilized for this study was Hurtado and Carter's (1997) work regarding students' sense of belonging. Their work not only factored in the effect that campus climate has on persistence, but speaks more to the underrepresented student experience. Social support theory (Sarason & Sarason, 1985) was also drawn upon in order to understand the importance that social support has on persistence. Students who feel a lack of support may begin to feel marginalized and ultimately suffer academically. Conversely, when college students believe that they matter to others, as Schlossberg (1989) pointed out, their feelings of marginality lessen and they can more easily connect with others. This in turn results in increased chances for academic success and overall happiness.

Studies have shown that Latino/a children may struggle with or question their identity (Torres, 2004) and if so, may be challenged with planning their future as a result (Torres, Winston, & Cooper, 2001). Institutions of higher learning should recognize problems students

might have with issues associated with racial identity and incorporate programs and services to meet unique needs of underrepresented students (Torres, Winston, & Cooper, 2001). Feeling part of the campus community while maintaining a sense of identity is important for the overall well-being of underrepresented students, which in turn has an effect on persistence (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Students who experience feelings of discomfort and/or believe they are being treated unfairly have difficulty maintaining good grades and interacting positively with classmates and faculty (Torres et al., 2003).

Research Design

This research focused on gaining a greater understanding of the influence that familial and institutional support holds for Latinas' decisions to attend and persist in college. By studying the issues that present themselves, it was hoped that educators might find ways in which to compliment familial support (or offer an adequate amount of support if familial support is absent) and/or strengthen programs and services at institutions of higher learning. With the growth of Latina enrollment in colleges and universities, (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Integrated Post Secondary Education Data System, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics, 2008b) it is imperative that educators develop or strive to further their understanding of the influence of perceived support from both the family and the institution. By doing so, it is hoped that recruiting approaches and issues associated with attrition and persistence could be developed and/or enhanced. Utilizing a qualitative research design, this study sought to answer specific questions posed in individual interviews in the hopes of developing such an understanding. Further, it is always helpful for educators to better comprehend the perceptions and subsequent effect of campus climate in relation to perceived support for all students. By educating ourselves about this issue if we are not already familiar, or revisiting it if we are, it reminds us of the

importance for students to feel a sense of belonging because it can aid efforts to address persistence (Gonzalez, 2002; Gupton, Castelo-Rodriguez, Martinez, & Quintanar, 2009; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Kamimura, 2003; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Rankin & Reason, 2005).

A qualitative design was chosen for this study because in order to more fully understand the factors surrounding perceived familial and institutional support among those identifying themselves as Latina, it is important to hear personal as well as cultural stories about the issues under examination. Individual interviews allow for interactive listening, which results in a greater understanding of the contextual framework in which participants have shaped their lives and subsequent views. With this increased understanding, we become better positioned to assign meaning within the realm of higher education. Studying people in their contextual environment helps the researcher comprehend how they construct meaning (Creswell, 2013; Guba, 1978; Maxwell, 2013). Further, this design was chosen because it is vital to be open and flexible to change; the research must be allowed to take unplanned turns if an understanding is to be gained and; with this approach, the individuals under study would be empowered to share their stories (Creswell, 2013). Lastly, because I am not of Hispanic heritage, it was hoped that by utilizing a qualitative approach I would gain additional insight and understanding into the issues under study by listening to the stories of participants. Although I am familiar with Latino culture, I recognize that I can never fully understand it because I am viewing it through the lens of an outsider.

Creswell (1998) described qualitative research as having the following traits: (a) the study is located in a natural setting, (b) the key instrument of data collection is the individual performing the research, (c) data are collected through words and phrases, (d) data is analyzed

inductively, and (e) the primary focus is on participants' perception and meaning. In keeping with this outline, the research was conducted within a natural setting near the Great Plains Community College (GPCC) campus; I served as the primary means of data collection; and the method in which data was analyzed was consistent with Creswell's recommended approach.

A case study with multiple participants was chosen in order to obtain an analysis of several Latinas. Through a case study, the researcher studies a case within a real life current context or setting (Yin, 2009). This approach enabled me to explore the similarities and differences in how perceived support from both family and one particular two-year community college affected seven (7) Latina students' decision to attend and persist in college. As stated previously, it is important to understand the influence that familial support holds for Latinas so that student affairs professionals might find ways in which to compliment that support at an institution of higher learning (or offer an adequate amount of support for the student if familial support is absent). A case study approach with multiple participants was chosen specifically because by capturing various viewpoints, it showed varying perspectives on the issues (Creswell, 2007, 2013).

As Creswell pointed out, this approach oftentimes leads to unanticipated discoveries that alter the researcher's planned course (1998, 2013). It is imperative that the qualitative researcher does not direct the research environment; in fact, this should be avoided at all costs (Guba, 1978).

Researcher Role. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) pointed out that a qualitative approach, "while not perfect, distorts the informants' expectations the least" (p. 23). Creswell (1998) maintained that qualitative research allows the researcher to be an "active learner" who can come to understand a story from the participants' point of view rather than as an "expert" who passes

judgment (p. 18). As Merriam (2009) noted, the principal instrument for data collection and analysis in a qualitative study is the researcher herself/himself. In this case the researcher is not Latina, and it was hoped that a qualitative approach would provide insight into the issues and influences under study that might not be gained via another approach. Although I may be familiar with Latino culture, I recognize that I can never fully understand a given culture when viewed through the lens of an outsider. As an outsider, I understood that I would be viewed as such, which, according to Merriam et al., (2001), could put me at a disadvantage in that it could prove more challenging to establish a rapport with participants as well as hinder my ability to navigate the culture of the institution itself given that I was not familiar with the campus prior to the study. However, it seemed that with most participants, being perceived as a stranger who was genuinely interested in gaining insight into the experiences and perceptions of those interviewed, I was able to enjoy the benefits of being an outsider, perhaps because, as Merriam et al., (2001) pointed out, I may have been perceived as being less of a risk than someone with whom participants were more familiar.

Guba (1978) has argued that bringing awareness of personal values and assumptions as well as acknowledging any biases that one might have should be considered so that the impact or quality of the study is not compromised, and I have kept this in mind throughout the course of collecting and analyzing information. In order to keep my personal experiences and biases in check, I kept a journal during the course of my study and involved myself with peer reviews in an effort to monitor my views and progress made. In the following section I address my subjectivity and explore the possible implications for interpretation.

Subjectivity Story. We all have our own perspective on any given subject and it is not only natural but also unavoidable to see the world through the context of our lives. Our family,

culture, and society in which we live, coupled with our education and experiences have an impact and subsequently influence the decisions that we make and the views that we hold. Subjectivity is an important aspect for the qualitative researcher, and it is imperative that we not only acknowledge but explore how it provides us with meaning. By recognizing subjectivity, we learn how it affects objectivity. In qualitative methodology, the researcher owes it to herself and her readers to reflect on her subjectivity and how it affects the research project (Ratner, 2002).

As Davidson (2012) pointed out, since the inception of qualitative investigation, researchers have struggled with the concept of self or as she called it, “the I in research” (p.1). Although, as Cihelkova argued, it is difficult to encapsulate personal subjectivity (2013), researchers should take into account the context in which their own views were formulated and their subsequent approach to the study and its participants. Mosselson (2010) maintained that recognizing and acknowledging one’s subjectivity or biases can be used as a tool in the research process and can serve to enrich data gathering and the interpretation and analysis of same. With this in mind, I strove to reflect and confront my perceptions and endeavored to face them and/or set them aside as needed during the course of my investigation. In an effort to show the reader my point of view, I offer the following paragraphs as an outline of my experiences that formed my subjectivity for the study.

My interest in conducting this particular study was formulated as a result of my personal experience. I always enjoyed school, but was not born into a family that expected me to enter college following my high school graduation. After marrying and becoming the mother of two, I found myself working a job that I despised, and I knew that I wouldn’t find a better position unless I obtained a college degree. I discussed my desire to enroll in college with my [then] husband, and he assured me that he would support my academic efforts so long as the house

remained clean and his dinner was served on time. Now that I was given “the green light,” I promptly enrolled in college and immediately became aware of the challenges I would face as a woman working full-time while juggling college studies and my role as a wife and mother. In spite of the hardships, I thrived in my new academic environment! It all came to a screeching halt, however, when, during a heated debate, I utilized deductive reasoning that I had learned in my Logic class to “win” a debate that my husband and I were having, and he responded by announcing that he would no longer allow me to continue my studies. Due to this and other issues of incompatibility, we divorced shortly thereafter and I took on a second job so that I could support my children in his absence.

I was able to return to college when I remarried some years later, and my new husband, supportive in both word and deed, encouraged me to fulfill my dream of obtaining a college degree by quitting my job and enrolling full-time. In addition to working full-time in a physically demanding job, my husband (a.k.a. ‘Mr. Wonderful’) took on all household and childcare duties so that I could focus solely on my studies. He even typed my papers for me because I hadn’t yet learned how! With my support system in place, I obtained my Bachelor’s degree, earned my Master’s, and then began teaching classes at the Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in which I worked.

During my doctoral coursework, I began formulating ideas for my research focus and was both intrigued and inspired by some of the stories offered by women who identified themselves as Latina that were enrolled in my classes. It seemed to me that many wanted to obtain a college degree, but were confronted with similar barriers that I had faced during my first marriage. One student shared with me that she had only taken three classes in as many years because she had to wait for her husband’s approval before she could enroll in any given course, “and he doesn’t give

his approval very often.” Another woman, unmarried at twenty-six and living at home, stated that it took her nine years to convince her father that she should be allowed to enroll in college. Not only did these women sometimes face barriers to enrolling in college in the first place, but once enrolled, many, if not most, needed to feel that they were supported by their significant others and/or family members in order to persist.

I found also that the views held by many of these women regarding what constituted support were oftentimes vastly different from mine. When asked whether they felt supported in their academic efforts, one student was very happy to report, “My husband supports me absolutely! He buys pizza for the kids on Friday nights so I can study.” Another stated that she felt completely supported because her husband would give her a ride to school when it was raining. Compared to the level of support I had come to enjoy from my second husband, in my view, these instances were examples of partial support at best. I was both intrigued and inspired by their stories, and sometimes troubled by them, which caused me to reflect back on my own experiences. I chose to leave what I considered a bad situation because my first husband sabotaged my dream of obtaining a college degree, yet other women chose to stay in a similar condition. I got out of my marriage and my situation vastly improved, but still I wondered, when conversing with these women, whether I would have completed my college education had I stayed.

I was curious about the similarities and the differences between these women and myself. Some of them made different choices than I did, and they held views that were vastly different from my own—and I wanted to understand those choices and viewpoints. I wondered why they stayed in these relationships if they weren’t allowed to realize their dreams. What was holding them back? Did they even *think* about leaving? In some cases, I believed that these women were

suffering, and it broke my heart that they seemed to make a conscious choice to continue suffering. It reminded me of my own story and the choices that I made. Additionally, I wondered why they “settled” for a minimal amount of support and didn't demand more. I questioned what it would be like to ‘walk in their shoes,’ and wondered why people would chose to take that on instead of walk away. This line of thought made me feel judgmental as a White researcher, and I didn't like how that made me feel. It became my intent and desire, therefore, to have a better understanding while looking through the lens of compassion rather than judgment.

Because so many of my students identified as Latina, I endeavored to learn more about their culture. In our society as well as many others, women are generally the caregivers (Gilligan, 1982 & 1993; Joseph, 2012), and I know that how we are raised can heavily influence the gender role expectations we have for ourselves and that others have for us. These expectations play a role in the choices we all make as women, and in cases where these expectations are embedded in the culture and psyche it could take on new meaning. I recognize that just because I know about a culture does not mean that I understand it—only that I am informed. It was my hope that by learning more about this subject matter I could become a more compassionate and informed woman and could then use this better understanding as an educator to empower women in general with regard to obtaining a college education. I hoped that I could learn enough to play a supportive role for the women in my classes both as an individual and as a representative of my institution. Lastly, it was my hope to learn more so that I might help devise ways in which to utilize programs and services in institutions of higher learning so that an adequate amount of support could be offered for those who receive little or none at home.

We live in a global world and we need to learn to successfully interact with people of differing backgrounds and views of the world than ours...so my study was, for me, a way to

become a more understanding and compassionate woman as well as feed my curiosity about the choices that women make. By learning more about others, I learn more about myself.

Methodology

Using a case study approach with multiple participants, this study was conducted in the spring semester of 2014 at Great Plains Community College (GPCC). Case study is a leading research method that is used to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions regarding a particular phenomenon, which in this case is enrollment and persistence of Latinas at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Yin (2009) offers a definition for case study as, “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).

By utilizing case study, researchers are better able to recognize and choose those cases that can provide a better interpretation of the phenomenon or issues under study and acquire a greater understanding through the answers provided than they would with surveys and questionnaires. As Tellis (1997) pointed out, a case study is oftentimes selective, thereby allowing the researcher to concentrate on one or two issues that are essential to the system being investigated. The research questions were designed to reveal the unique experiences of the participants under study regarding their perspectives of campus climate and gender role expectations and the impact that these perceptions had on their sense of belonging at the institution.

Gaining permission to conduct the study

- Before starting my research, I first needed to gain permission from key administrators at Great Plains Community College (GPCC) to conduct research at that location. I first sent

a letter to my point of contact at the institution explaining the study and asking permission to conduct it at GPCC. (See Attachment A)

- Once permission was given and approval was obtained from my committee, I submitted an application to K-State's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. (See Attachment B)
- The proposed questions that I planned to ask participants during individual interviews was submitted along with my application to the K-State's IRB. (See Attachment C)
- An e-mail requesting volunteers for my study was sent to my contact as soon as IRB approval was secured. (See Attachment D)

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations for a study define the parameters of the research, clearly show what is and what is not included, and are under the control of the researcher. Limitations of a study refer to those limiting conditions that are unavoidably present and are influences that the researcher cannot control (Punch, 2006).

Delimitations for this study included:

1. *The study focused on Latinas only* – As an educator who truly believes in helping others improve their lives through education, I have spent much of my career endeavoring to find ways in which to support those who dream of obtaining a college degree. I have a particular interest in serving the needs of women, because as the caregivers in the family, oftentimes women put their needs after the needs of everyone else and as a result may postpone college enrollment or even give up their dream of obtaining a college degree altogether. Additionally, because of my own experience and listening to the challenges of many of my female students, I knew there were times when the pursuit of an education

could create conflict in the home. I wondered how higher education professionals might find ways to provide support for those who did not receive it elsewhere.

I initially entertained the thought of interviewing several women of differing cultures and races, but quickly realized that the scope would be too broad for a dissertation. I chose to focus on Latinas because at the time I was employed at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and became better acquainted with Latino culture in general and the unique challenges faced by many of the Latinas in my classes in particular. Although I had planned to interview students at my college, I realized that because most students on campus knew me, some might feel pressured to volunteer and/or provide answers that they thought I might wish to hear, thereby skewing findings.

Although I could have interviewed women from another institution closer to my home, I chose instead to persist with my initial plan to focus on Latinas enrolled at an HSI. In the Latino culture there is a greater percentage of traditional households than in other groups (Arciniega et al., 2008), and given my interest in gender role expectations I was intrigued by the possibility of exploring that issue further. This course of study therefore would be interesting as well as necessary, I reasoned, given that I was fascinated by the unique challenges that many Latinas face, and also because I found the body of literature focused on Latinas at two-year HSIs lacking.

2. *Only a few Latinas were included in the study* – although the nature of my study design called for me to interview a small number of Latinas, this also made sense given the time constraints. By focusing on fewer participants, I could delve deeper into their stories than I would have been able to had I conducted two or three times as many interviews of a shorter duration.

3. *Research was conducted at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Midwest* – this decision was made for purely practical reasons, as I live in the Midwest.

The limitations of this study included:

1. *I am not Latina* – I recognize that I can never truly understand the culture or the challenges faced by those interviewed. As an outsider, participants may have felt the need to alter their stories for a variety of reasons.
2. *I do not speak Spanish* – For several participants, English is not their first language. Not surprisingly, a couple of the participants spoke of the challenges associated with finding the right words to express themselves to others when they were more comfortable speaking Spanish or Spanglish. (Spanglish is not a language, but rather is formed by intermingling Spanish with English).
3. *Participants in the study were all full-time traditional students* – and therefore were not representative of all Latinas at the college under study. Participants are referred to as traditional because they are all enrolled full-time, entered college upon completion of high school and are financially dependent on their parents (Choy, 2002).
4. *All of the students interviewed had some affiliation with the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO)* – Although I endeavored to include students who were not necessarily members of the organization by asking HALO members to invite other classmates, the majority of those that volunteered for the study were active members. Although two of the students were members but not active within the organization, all seven participants reported strong ties to the HALO organization and cited that group specifically as important to their sense of belonging.

5. *The study was conducted under time constraints* – because I did not have the luxury of being in the field for several semesters the result may merely be a snapshot of the views of participants rather than a true indication of their opinions overall. Individual interviews were conducted over the period of one week. If a participant was having an exceptionally bad week or an exceptionally good week it might have altered the response(s) provided.

Research Site

Creswell (2007) maintained that the researcher must provide a detailed description of the case and its setting in order to set the context for the study. This case study was conducted near the campus of Great Plains Community College (GPCC), a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Midwest.

GPCC has established recruitment and retention programs targeted specifically at the needs of underrepresented students of color, including African-Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic/Latino/a Americans. In addition to recruiting potential students college-age and older, the institution has an outreach program geared for high school students and their families which focuses on answering questions related to higher education in general and financial aid specifically.

GPCC is located in a town with a large Latino population and as such, administrators, faculty and staff strive to meet the needs of members in the surrounding community as well as the students on campus. In addition to offering a plethora of programs and services and transfer programs to nearby four-year institutions for its students, educational opportunities on the GPCC campus include adult education and continuing education programs; a resource center for those interested in obtaining U.S. citizenship; an ESL program and; a literacy

program for migrant workers and their families. The college is noted for innovative program offerings and has enjoyed a stellar reputation in academia.

Selection of Participants

This study focused on those students who were enrolled at GPCC January 2013 through December 2013. One of the criteria for participation in the study was that students be currently enrolled in at least their second semester at GPCC or recently graduated. As an indicator of more likelihood of academic persistence, it was required that students be in good academic standing (i.e., not on academic probation). A second criterion for participation was that students identify themselves as Latina. (Note that family country of origin was not a consideration). A third criterion for participation, although not a requirement, was that students were first-generation college students. First-generation refers to a student whose mother, father, or guardian (if applicable) has not obtained a college degree. This first-generation status designation allows for family members attending college in the past or concurrently attending college, but none have of yet actually completed a degree, whether associate's or bachelor's degrees (Payne, 2007). Though not a criterion for participation, preference was given to students from homes in which Spanish was spoken because it was assumed there would be a higher chance of participants coming from traditional households.

Creswell (1998) recommended that the researcher of a case study with multiple participants have five to twenty five participants, although qualitative research does not really have a predetermined amount of individuals needed for a study. Patton (2002) argued that there are no set rules for the number of participants in qualitative inquiry. For this study eight students met in a group setting to review potential questions for individual interviews and seven students participated in two—three individual interviews.

I used purposeful sampling and criterion sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling calls for the researcher to look for specific traits or qualities in participants that would lend a rich amount of information (Creswell, 2006; Koerber & McMichael, 2008), and ensure that diversity in varying categories are explored (Creswell, 2006). Criterion sampling is a logical choice and works well when the people under study have experienced similar occurrences (Creswell, 1998)—in this case, enrolling and persisting in college.

In order to identify potential participants from which to sample, I on two different occasions presented to members of the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO). The first presentation was made to HALO members only; for the second presentation HALO members were asked to invite other Latinas currently enrolled or had recently graduated from GPCC. During both presentations, the purpose of the study was discussed, the anticipated benefits to higher education professionals in general and members of the GPCC community in particular were covered, as was the time commitment for participation. Presentations were followed by a question and answer period, and those students who identified themselves as Latina and first-generation college students were asked to volunteer for the study.

Data Collection

Solicitation for volunteers for the initial group interview and individual interviews for this study commenced as soon as committee and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at Kansas State University was secured. K-State adheres to federal regulations that require all research involving human subjects be adequately reviewed to ensure the protection of participants. Research protocol must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to participants and outline protection strategies and anticipated benefits to participants and others.

GPCC has no IRB and administrators at that institution determined that K-State's IRB approval would be sufficient to ensure the protection of students. A copy of my application to K-State's IRB and their response was sent to my contact, a key administrator at GPCC for review.

Initial contact with students/potential participants for this study was made at one of two HALO meetings held on the GPCC campus. Students were told about my study, the potential benefits and the time commitment involved. After sharing all this information I asked for volunteers for a group interview whereas the proposed questions that were to be asked at individual interviews were to be discussed for clarity and changed/tweaked as needed. This group interview was conducted off-campus at an agreed upon site. Because students that met for the initial group meeting were promised a meal for their input/feedback on questions to be asked during individual interviews and requested something other than offerings at the cafeteria on campus, we met in a private dining room at a restaurant not far from campus.

After the group discussed and offered changes to proposed questions for individual interviews, an updated version of the questions were sent to those who had participated in the group discussion. They were asked to review the changes and provide additional feedback if they felt it was needed. After students 'signed off' on the revised questions, those changes were sent to K-State's IRB along with a second/updated application to conduct the individual interviews. Once approval to conduct individual interviews was secured, I contacted volunteers for the study to arrange date/times to meet with them.

These individual interviews took place in a private meeting room at a hotel across from the GPCC campus. The reasons for meeting off-campus were two-fold: first, because a few participants requested that interviews not take place on college grounds, and second, because the

days/times that worked best for the vast majority of participants was during Spring Break when the school was closed and students had more time available.

The individual interviews were the primary method of data collection utilized for this study. These individual interviews consisted of two—three interviews, each lasting 1—1 ½ hours in length. Two follow up phone calls were made for a third and fourth interview respectively, and three follow up e-mails were conducted.

Member checks were conducted after interviews and peer debriefing and member checks were completed again after data analysis. Creswell (1998) offered that member checks occur when data gathered and conclusions drawn are tested or checked with those from whom the information was originally obtained. This not only aids in establishing credibility to the study, but Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that member checking is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. Member checking provides the researcher an opportunity to achieve a greater understanding of participants' view(s); provides participants the opportunity to clarify meaning and correct any errors in interpretations; and gives volunteer additional information (Morse, 1994).

In addition, I relied on personal observations via journal notes as well. (Attachment H provides an account of data documentation for the 855+ pages of raw data that this study generated.)

Group interview. Nine students indicated a willingness to meet in a group setting to review potential questions that were proposed for individual interviews, and eight of the nine volunteers were present at the appointed time. This group meeting took place in a private dining room at an area restaurant close to campus. At the beginning of the group session the purpose of the study was again explained. Students were told why their college experiences were of interest

to not only myself, but to the faculty, staff and administrators at GPCC and the greater educational community as well. They were told that the information and insights provided would help individuals at the institution to better meet their needs as well as the needs of those who follow in their footsteps. I further shared that information gleaned throughout the course of this study would provide insights for other researchers, and it was shared why it was that the individuals were chosen for participation via a discussion of the criteria for selection, and what their role would be if they chose to remain as a participant.

Participants were asked to sign a consent form to participate in the study and verbal permission was obtained to record the session. The proposed questions for individual interviews were then reviewed and discussed. There was a lot of dialogue surrounding the reasoning behind some of the questions posed, but very little was changed regarding the spirit or meaning behind the questions themselves. Changes that were made include the following:

1. Initially the terms listed as examples for how students identified themselves included Latina and Hispanic; students asked to include more options such as Mexican and Salvadorian.
2. The initial question about immigration status needed to be clarified and changed from ‘How did this (first, second, etc.) generational factor affect your decision to enroll in college?’ to ‘How did being a (first, second...) generation immigrant affect your decision to enroll in college, if at all?’
3. Students did not understand the meaning of ‘campus climate’ so it was changed to ‘environment on campus.’
4. The term ‘persistence’ was not understood by several students, so all questions pertaining to that issue was changed to ‘continuing [your] studies’.

5. Questions regarding discrimination were reworded for clarity, as were questions pertaining to participation in the classroom.

After receiving the above-mentioned feedback from the group, recommended modifications were made and the revised questions were e-mailed to participants, who were solicited for additional feedback. Participants did not advocate for the need to make additional changes at that time. (See Attachment F for changes made to proposed interview questions that were suggested by the group).

Individual interviews. The purpose of conducting a group interview was to review the questions that I proposed to ask during individual interviews for clarity and meaning. After the group interview took place and questions were revised as needed, a copy of the updated questions was sent to K-State's IRB for a second approval; this time to conduct the individual interviews. (See Attachment E for 2nd/updated IRB Application and Attachment F for updated questions to be asked during individual interviews).

Nine students had indicated a willingness to volunteer for an individual interview and once IRB approval to conduct individual interviews was secured, I worked with participants to establish interview schedules that were mutually agreeable. Interviews were scheduled for a month later, and appointments were confirmed by e-mail and/or text messages once dates and times had been agreed upon. Due to scheduling conflicts only seven of the nine who expressed interest in volunteering for the study were able to participate.

Because a few students asked that interviews take place off campus, and the dates that were most accommodating for the majority of students was during Spring Break when the campus was closed, individual interviews took place in a private meeting room at a local hotel near campus.

At the beginning of individual interviews I again shared the purpose of the study and its importance, and what their role as a participant would be should they choose to remain in the study. Students were told that they could decline to answer any question they chose for any reason and without providing explanation and that they would not be asked to divulge anything that they were not comfortable sharing. Students were also reminded that they could drop out of the study at any time for any reason without suffering any repercussions. Informed consent forms were signed prior to interviews as is required by Kansas State University's IRB. (See Appendix I) Permission was then obtained verbally to record interviews.

Throughout these individual interviews data was collected to further understand meaning and explore themes. Interviews are a form of data collection described by Creswell (1998) as discussions that can range from semi-structured to open-ended. The semi-structured interviews allowed for a varying degree of latitude in interactions with participants. I was able to adapt to responses from students, ask for clarification and/or conduct follow-up questions when needed (Patton, 2002).

Seidman (1991) recommended a three-step interview process when conducting interviews. The first step in the process requires the researcher to focus on the participant's life history. During the first part of the interview I asked participants to share information about their lives as it related to the topic. Participants were asked to divulge only that which they were comfortable sharing (Creswell, 2013).

The second step of the interview process calls for the researcher to ask participants to share details of their experience. Participants were provided a list via e-mail of predetermined interview questions, and were also provided a hard copy of questions at the onset of interviews. The purpose of this step, according to Seidman (1991), is to focus on specific details of the

experience as related to the topic of the study. This assisted me in the collection of narratives needed for data analysis. Participants were asked to recreate details of their lived experiences by offering stories and anecdotes relative to the subject matter of study.

The third part of the interview process outlined by Seidman (1991) calls for participants to reflect on meaning. ‘Meaning’ in this context is derived through intellectual and emotional connections. In order to make meaning, participants must “look at how factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation” (Seidman, 1991, p. 12). At the onset of the second interview, students were asked if there was anything they wished to add regarding questions covered in the initial interview. This gave students an opportunity to expand on information shared and offer additional comments if they so desired.

I followed Patton’s (2002) recommendations regarding interview questions; they were specific, standardized, worded carefully so that students understood meaning and prepared in advance. There were various types of questions posed, representing specific categories such as questions that speak to experience and behavior and opinions and values. I explored the feelings and knowledge of participants as Patton (2002) recommended. Further, I was less concerned with specific facts surrounding particular instances...but rather was more concerned with the issues surrounding the overall experiences and how the individuals assigned meaning to them as Van Manen (1990) suggested.

While conducting individual interviews, I was an active listener and paid close attention to nonverbal cues such as voice inflection, body language and eye movement as recommended in the literature (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Interviews were structured and the research questions that were utilized addressed how Latina students at GPCC perceive the effects of familial support

to college enrollment and persistence and how they perceive the effects of institutional support to attend college through graduation.

Again, the primary research question that guided the study was: ***What are the factors that contribute to enrollment sustainability and completion of a degree at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) for Latinas?***

To better understand the lived experiences of Latinas' decisions to enroll and pursue a degree at GPCC, the study was framed utilizing Hurtado and Carter's (1997) work surrounding a sense of belonging, and social support theory (Sarason & Sarason, 1985).

Hurtado and Carter (1997) assessed the effectiveness of student participation in a variety of academic and social activities as well as membership in various communities within the college environment in order to understand which activities and memberships contribute to feelings of 'fitting in' to college life. Specifically, their work examined how students' transitional experiences and perception of campus racial climate influence their sense of belonging. The following is a list of the sub-questions asked; a brief discussion regarding the reasoning for each is provided:

- 1. What personal factors have changed or evolved since the transition from enrollment to persistence for Latinas?***
- 2. What personal factors influence Latina's perception of a welcoming environment on campus?***
- 3. What institutional factors influence Latina's perception of a welcoming environment on campus?***
- 4. How do Latina's perceive their academic experiences outside of class?***
- 5. How does membership in religious or social organizations influence a sense of***

belonging at the institution?

6. *How do perceived gender role expectations impact Latina's decisions to persist in college?*

Based on the responses of participants, I then developed additional questions to clarify meaning and gain additional understanding. These follow-up interviews were less structured in nature and gave participants an additional opportunity to share their experiences, perceptions and insights.

Member checks. Member checks were instituted so that participants had an opportunity to verify transcript accuracy and data interpretation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintained that member checks are the most crucial technique for establishing credibility and can be done during the interview process and/or at the conclusion of the study. During individual interviews, I restated information provided and asked for clarification as needed. I e-mailed copies of interview transcripts after interviews were conducted and asked participants to reflect on meaning and offer any additional comments they felt necessary as well as delete anything that they, upon reflection, wanted to omit for any reason. Further, my findings were sent to participants and they were asked again if they had any further comments or wanted to clarify any comments they recognized as their own. In addition, participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw permission to use any or all of the information shared during the interviews. This process not only adds credibility to the findings, but speaks to the ethics involved in using personal information shared by participants.

According to Lincoln and Guba, member checks provide participants an opportunity to correct errors, clarify meaning and challenge misinterpretations. They further provide individuals with an opportunity to offer additional information after reflection on previous discussion(s)

(1985). Member checks help to improve the accuracy, credibility, validity and transferability of a study.

Protection of Human Subjects

Education research professionals set standards of rigor for conducting research, as does Kansas State University where I am pursuing my doctorate work. K-State, through its IRB, adheres to federal guidelines that set boundaries of ethical behavior addressing involvement of human subjects for purposes of research, and I followed these guidelines at all times. Interviews commenced after committee and IRB approval was given prior to both the group interview and individual interviews. (See Attachment B and E for applications). Consent forms were signed by participants before interviews began (see Attachment I).

In order to address professional ethics, the confidentiality of participants was of the highest priority and efforts were made to safeguard the identities of individuals throughout the duration of the study. Pseudonyms for the school where the study was conducted as well as all participants involved have been used at all times. These efforts notwithstanding, participants were made aware that neither confidentiality nor anonymity could be absolutely guaranteed in spite of discussions surrounding the confidentiality of conversations. Participants were informed that they could decline participation at the outset of the study or at any time during subsequent conversations without any adverse consequences.

Recordings were maintained under password protection and were destroyed after transcription. Original journal notes and transcription materials will be retained for three years in a password-protected computer and are accessible only to myself. All data was coded and is stored separately. All files will be destroyed in three years, unless participants agree to allow the research and its findings to be kept for future publishing purposes.

Data Analysis

An analysis of collected data highlighted the experiences of Latina students at GPCC. The primary data source was obtained as a result of individual interviews, but also included data from the group interview and journal notes of personal reflections. The compilation of this data was analyzed in order to gain an understanding of the effects of familial and institutional perceived support on Latinas' decisions to attend and persist in college.

A major function of analyzing data involves coding information gained in order to study and dissect to look for themes. Krathwohl (1998) referred to coding as “interpreting” (p. 307), which is an arduous and sometimes overwhelming task. In order to begin the process of coding and investigating the themes that emerged, I followed the guidance offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) regarding thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a procedure that aids the researcher in identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thomas, 2008). Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined six phases for thematic analysis. By utilizing this approach, the researcher, “begins to notice, and look for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data” (p. 86).

Phase 1: Familiarizing self with data. In this phase, the researcher reads and re-reads the data, taking notes during the process. Transcribing interviews and checking for accuracy is imperative and helps to better familiarize oneself with the data.

All interview recordings were replayed within days of original interviews while the effect, energy and dynamic of interaction(s) were fresh in my mind. Listening to the tapes yet again allowed me to hear comments, responses and reactions perhaps overlooked the first time, thereby increasing the chances of hearing nuances not only in what was said, but in the choice of words and tone that was used. I listened to recordings yet a third time prior to beginning the

process of transcribing the tapes. Once transcribed, I listened to the tapes multiple times in order to check for accuracy.

Regarding the group interview, journal notes were taken on room configuration, outlining who sat with whom, which individuals were more vocal and/or animated, which were more withdrawn or quiet, and so forth. In essence, I made efforts to reconstruct not just the conversations themselves, but the connections between participants and how they responded to each other within the context of those discussions. Although the primary purpose of the group interview was to discuss/review questions to be asked during individual interviews, participants' responses and subsequent discussions regarding some of the questions allowed me to begin identifying possible themes. The group discussion was re-reviewed a number of times to note affect and inflection. Written transcripts were continually reviewed in search of categories of ideas. These multiple successive reviews allowed for data analysis that uncovered deeper levels of meaning and allowed for nuanced themes to emerge (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

For individual interviews I repeated the procedure, reflecting on participant's responses, body language and overall state. This procedure aided in the process of developing themes and categories within which to organize data.

As Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended, transcripts were read and read again prior to the coding process. Data analysis was approached with a concern for an open mind and willingness to allow meaning in order that structures would surface (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This required time between transcript reviews.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes. During this phase initial codes were listed. A code is a label given to a section of text in order to identify it as an idea or issue of importance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In vivo coding and values coding as outlined by Saldana (2009), were utilized

during this process. In vivo coding is a word or expression drawn from actual verbiage used by participants (Thomas, 2006). Values coding requires the researcher to assign codes to data that “reflects the participant’s values, attitudes, and belief’s, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (Saldana, 2009, p. 89).

I initially looked to the research questions in order to code relevant words or phrases. I then expanded my efforts to include words and phrases with similar meaning. It should be noted that there were several occasions that more than one code was used on a single statement. I then proceeded to reduce the data through values coding. Values codes were differentiated by using the letter *V* to signify a value, *A* for attitude and *B* for belief. Needless to say, throughout this process, a long list of codes was created.

Coding was done manually, by writing notes in margins, highlighting transcripts with various colors, reprinting utilizing various fonts, underlining text, and the use of Post-it ® notes. I had several large tables and two rooms dedicated to this process, which ultimately helped with the next phase, given that I am very visual. Ideas or categories of ideas eventually were categorized by central themes that were supported by participant citations. With this approach, evidence and meaning was provided for the experiences described.

Phase 3: Searching for themes. In an effort to search for themes the researcher focuses on the broader notion of topics (themes) rather than codes. In order to do so, codes were sorted into potential themes, or units of meaning, in an effort to reduce the large portions of data that held similar ideas or concepts. This is not the final phase for identifying themes, but rather the first important step in the process.

Codes were analyzed and merged into potential themes by utilizing what Saldana (2009) called focused coding. This process involved looking for the most noticeable categories and

required that I made decisions about which initial codes made sense (Charmaz, 2006). The purpose of utilizing focused coding was to develop categories, or potential themes, by searching for recurring codes.

Once this was done, I walked away from the process for a few days and then approached it again with fresh perspective. This system allowed for a continuum of coding that affirmed familiar themes as well as allowed for the introduction of new themes. Special attention was given to word and language selection, as well as cultural context of words chosen in order assist in a better understanding of ideas and themes expressed.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes. After potential themes were identified, they were then reviewed for further modification. This phase is a two-step process that requires the researcher to review each coded segment of data for each theme identified and then determine if there are any coherent patterns present. If identified themes do not meet this standard, they were reworked to create a new theme or blended into an existing one (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process I constantly referred to the research purpose and questions to determine whether or not the themes were authentic to the data gathered.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. In this phase, further refinements of classified themes were obtained by identifying the core of each theme's message by looking at the understandings of the issues that each theme offered. This data was put into a matrix that showed the relationship among various categories so that similar experiences could be viewed together. Themes were reviewed in this manner several times prior to interpreting. I traced the themes decided upon back through the categories and codes from which they emerged and looked at how they related to each other. By utilizing member checks I was able to connect participants'

experiences and determine the values and meanings assigned to those experiences. This process allowed me to connect the data with the themes that were decided upon.

Immediately following this process, I relied on a member of my doctoral committee to provide the guidance necessary by conducting peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is, in essence, an objective look at data gathering. Creswell calls it “an external check of the research process” (2013, p. 202). The peer debriefer was responsible for asking questions regarding methods of collection of data and how meanings and interpretations were assigned. By asking these questions, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that it keeps the researcher honest.

Categories and emerging themes were also discussed with two different Latina professional colleagues of my acquaintance for input and validation. This offered deeper and alternative interpretations of findings.

Phase 6: Producing the report. The last phase required that I write my final report. Prior to doing so, I revisited the purpose for the research, the research questions and how participants’ experiences were reflected in the themes decided upon. Final findings were then verified through member checks for accuracy and rigor.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness for this study was obtained both in the thoroughness of standards set forth and in the care taken to maintain ethical boundaries and responsibilities. In terms of personal ethics, I was transparent with participants regarding both personal and professional background. By honoring professional, institutional and personal standards of professionalism and ethical behavior, the trustworthiness of this project has been safeguarded.

Trustworthy qualitative research calls for a study to be well grounded in the literature, credible, methodical, transparent, and analyzed without regard to personal biases (Cresswell,

2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is determined by four factors: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. These four variables will be discussed in greater detail in order to further establish the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility. Credibility in qualitative research can be established through prolonged engagement in the field, peer debriefing, member checks, and triangulation of data (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Interviews for this study commenced as soon as committee and IRB approval had been secured. (Note: IRB approval had to be secured twice; once for the group interview and once for individual interviews.) It was anticipated that the research in the field would take one to two months, which comprises prolonged engagement. I did, in fact, take approximately seven weeks to complete the required fieldwork. Lincoln and Guba argued that member checks are the most important factor in establishing the credibility of the researcher and the study (1985). Member checks were addressed through the following method: first, during the interviews themselves I asked follow-up questions in order to verify meaning; at the onset of the second and third interview (if applicable) a discussion surrounding responses given during the first interview (and/or second interview) took place to clarify or expand on meaning; after audio recordings of interviews were transcribed, I sent copies to participants with an invitation for feedback, whereas participants were asked to check for accuracy. They were given the opportunity to accept the transcripts as written, add any modifications or omit any responses they deemed necessary for any reason. Only after participant approval was obtained did I begin coding for emergent themes. Lastly, after coding was completed and themes were decided upon, I e-mailed participants my preliminary findings to check for clarity. Once again participants were offered the opportunity to elaborate on or delete any responses they recognized as their own.

Triangulation was achieved via the group interview, individual interviews, peer examination and debriefing, by keeping a methodological log and thorough reflective journals and through peer examination whereas categories and emerging themes were discussed with Latina professionals of my acquaintance for input and validation. Creswell stated that triangulation encourages the researcher to develop an accurate and credible report (2002). The process of triangulation also helped me to organize data from various sources in such a way that specific themes materialized (Anfara et al., 2002; Patton, 2002).

Dependability. In order to reach dependability, I incorporated a code-recode strategy, triangulated findings, and instituted a peer examination (Anfara et al., 2002). This was done in an effort to provide evidence of the appropriateness of research analysis, which Lincoln and Guba maintained is needed in order to satisfy dependability (1985). I analyzed the data by utilizing categorical aggregation, instituting direct interpretation, establishing patterns and looking for similarities, and making naturalistic generalizations of the data. In addition, I kept a log of the processes adhered to regarding the steps taken throughout the entire process, as was recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This process encouraged me to reflect on findings and subsequent interpretations of same.

Confirmability. In order to achieve confirmability, a logical conclusion must be drawn from various sources of data surrounding the issue or issues under study. Confirmability calls for the triangulation of data coupled with reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Anafara et al., 2002). Reflexivity is the acknowledgement of the researcher that subsequent actions taken and decisions made throughout the course of the study will inevitably—directly or indirectly—have an impact on the meaning derived and context of the experiences under investigation (Creswell, 2013). Examining the power relationship between the participants and myself is one of the

means in which I addressed reflexivity. A detailed log of my progress and subsequent decisions made and steps taken throughout the process was utilized as a means of triangulation and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be a useful strategy to determine the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry; it can be an impetus for self-reflection and questioning. Another method to ensure confirmability was achieved through peer debriefing (Creswell, 1998).

Transferability. Drisko (1997) warns against ambiguousness regarding the transferability of findings, pointing out that this is a flaw in many qualitative studies. Keeping this in mind, I strove to bring clarity of purpose. The findings generated from this study, while not intended to be broadly transferable to all Latina students, nonetheless gives voice to the Latina student experiences at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution and provides insights beneficial to institutions of higher education. I made a concerted effort to triangulate the interpretations drawn from the findings in order to give greater weight to their meaning.

Transferability was ensured through the provision of rich descriptions of emerging themes (Anfara et al., 2002). In order to incorporate rich description, I included information about individual participants as well as summarizing general comments and specific quotes made during group and individual interviews. Such rich information allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability Creswell (2007). Lastly, I supplied contextual discussions addressing interview settings.

Summary

Using a case study approach with multiple participants, this study was conducted in the spring 2014 semester at Great Plains Community College (GPCC). Case study was used to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions regarding a particular phenomenon, which in this case is the enrollment and persistence of Latinas at a two-year Hispanic Serving

Institution (HSI) in the Midwest. As Yin (2009) pointed out, case study research involves the investigation of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting.

The best approach for this research was a case study analysis because with that design, observational data (in this instance individual interviews) is collected and participants are studied in-depth, which allows for a greater understanding of the issue(s) under investigation (Creswell, 2013). Further, with this approach I was able to draw conclusions about the overall meaning of participants' experiences (Stake, 1995). It is important to hear personal as well as cultural accounts so that we can better comprehend how these accounts shape the lives and subsequent perceptions of participants, and with this approach I was able to do so. The research questions were designed to empower participants to share their stories and to reveal their unique experiences and perspectives of campus climate and the impact that these views have on their sense of belonging at the institution.

By utilizing a case study approach, I was able to study the similarities and differences in how perceived support from both family and the institution under study affected seven (7) traditional Latina students' decision to attend and persist with their studies. The study was located in a natural setting, as the researcher I was the key instrument of data collection, data was collected through words and phrases, analyzed inductively, and the primary focus was on participants' perception and the way that they assigned meaning.

Chapter 4 - Findings

The theoretical framework utilized for this study was Hurtado and Carter's (1997) work regarding students' sense of belonging and social support theory (Sarason & Sarason, 1985). This chapter reports the findings of my research gained via individual in-depth interviews with seven Latinas attending Great Plains Community College (GPCC). The chapter is divided into two sections; the first section covers aggregate demographic information with descriptive details as reported by the seven participants under study. The second section offers a discussion and analysis of my findings, which are arranged around research questions and emerging themes.

Five of the seven participants were interviewed twice, and two of the participants were interviewed three times. Interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes, and all but two follow-up interviews were conducted in a private setting off-campus. The two follow-up interviews, which was the third interview for two of the participants, were conducted over the phone due to scheduling conflicts. I conducted each interview myself, and for consistency, each followed a standard interview protocol that participants were sent in advance by e-mail. In addition, participants were provided with the interview questions at the beginning of each interview.

Demographic Information

Students were asked about demographic information at the beginning of the initial interview. Seven Latinas were interviewed for this case study. All participants are high school graduates who enrolled in college immediately after graduating, and all are currently enrolled at GPCC and reported that they are in good academic standing. Five of the participants were in their second semester at GPCC, one was in her third semester and one was in her fourth semester.

Six participants stated that their families' country of origin was Mexico, and one reported that her father's family was from Mexico and her mother's family was from the U.S. Four

participants were born in Mexico, and three were born in the U.S. All seven participants were bilingual; five cited Spanish as their first language, and two were raised speaking both English and Spanish. The four participants born in Mexico all learned English in this country. Six participants were first-generation college students, although one of them had an older sister who graduated college with a Bachelor's degree. One participant was a second-generation college student. Four participants were first-generation immigrants, two were second-generation immigrants, and one was a second-generation immigrant on her father's side. Six of the participants lived with their parents and one had an apartment close to the GPCC campus. Five participants had brothers and the other two did not. Two participants reported that they were raised in a traditional household where women were expected to be caregivers and take care of all household chores; (e.g., cooking and cleaning). Six of the participants were employed and worked at least 25 hours a week. It is unknown whether any of the students were undocumented, as that question was not raised.

Table 4.1 outlines the demographic details of participants.

Table 4.1 Demographic Information for Participants

	Mary	Sonia	Karina	Vanessa	Paola	Rosalinda	Beatriz
High school graduate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
# Semesters at GPCC	2	2	3	2	2	2	4
In good academic standing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Term used to describe self	Latina or Hispanic	Mexican, Hispanic, Latina (in that order)	Hispanic and then Mexican	Mexican primarily; Hispanic or Latina as well	Mexican primarily; Hispanic ok as well	Hispanic	Mexican primarily; Hispanic or Latina as well
Preferred term others use to describe them	Prefer Mexican But no matter if called something else	Mexican	Definitely Hispanic	Hispanic (Does not like being referred to as Mexican)	Mexican	Hispanic	Mexican, Hispanic or Latina (no preference)
First generation college student	Yes	No Mother has an Associate's degree	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes but older sister has Bachelor's degree	Yes
Family country of origin	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Dad from Mexico, Mom from U.S.	Mexico
Where born	U.S.	Mexico	U.S.	Mexico	Mexico	U.S.	Mexico
Immigrant status	2 nd generation	1 st generation	2 nd generation	1 st generation	1 st generation	2 nd generation on father's side	1 st generation
Bi-lingual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Live with parents	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Raised in traditional household	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Brother(s)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Employed	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Emergent Themes

In order to more fully examine the issues associated with Latinas' views of campus climate and gender role expectations and how they contribute to persistence, each respondent participated in two – three structured interviews. The interviews averaged 60 – 90 minutes each and took place near the college campus. I conducted all of the interviews utilized in this study. In order to facilitate the process and offer consistency, I followed a predetermined set of questions (see Appendix G).

The interview questions focused on three areas of exploration regarding participants' persistence in college. The three areas of inquiry were campus climate, sense of belonging and gender role expectations. After all of the interviews were transcribed and member checks completed, the data was coded in an effort to find repeated words and/or phrases that indicated issues or themes that were deemed most important to participants. During this analytical process, three themes emerged. These themes were identified through a coding process that collated frequently expressed words or phrases. The following three themes that emerged from this process included:

(a) the importance of family support and the need to stay close, (b) perceptions regarding academic environment, and (c) the college experience outside the classroom.

With each main theme, the following sub-themes emerged:

The importance of family support and the need to stay close: 1) the impact of immigration status, 2) the desire to make family proud, 3) because money matters, 4) sources of motivation for persistence and commitment to graduating, and 5) gender role expectations.

Perceptions regarding academic environment: 1) faculty enthusiasm and teaching methods, 2) the importance of faculty-student interaction and feeling respected, and 3) the benefit of positive feedback.

The college experience outside the classroom: 1) the importance of feeling respected by and

having positive interactions with non-faculty members, 2) the impact of academic advising, 3) the positive effects of membership in groups, and 4) campus climate and the sense of belonging. Each of these themes is presented and discussed in turn.

Table 4.2 reflects the three major themes and related subthemes.

Table 4.2 *Three major themes and subthemes*

Themes	The importance of family support and the need to stay close	Perceptions regarding academic environment	The college experience outside the classroom
	The impact of immigration status	Faculty enthusiasm and teaching methods	The importance of feeling respected by and having positive interactions with non-faculty members
	The desire to make family proud	The importance of faculty-student interaction and feeling respected	The impact of academic advising
	Because money matters	The benefit of positive feedback.	The positive effects of membership in groups
	Sources of motivation for persistence and commitment to graduating		Campus climate and the sense of belonging
	Gender role expectations		

I developed representative generalizations from the interview data after completion of the interview data analysis. This in turn enabled me to develop generalizations about the study in terms of themes and how they compared and/or contrasted with one another. This step aided in the analysis because it facilitated the need to explore similarities, patterns and themes within responses provided by participants.

The Importance of Family Support and the Need to Stay Close

With many racial or ethnic minority groups, one of the most defining cultural characteristics is the view of and connectedness to family (Alire, 1997). Within the Latino community, the importance of family and family tradition is considered a significant aspect of its

members' lives and this truth does not change when a child reaches the age of maturity and contemplates enrolling in college (Nora & Ramirez, 2006; Torres, 2003). Because Latino/as are raised to embrace family and to be loyal and respectful, it can easily be surmised that once the children of the family graduate high school, they may be influenced by family status and dynamic in their decision whether or not to enroll in college. Further, as Solberg, Valdez and Villarreal (1994) pointed out, these young adults may also consider the needs and wishes of the family when choosing a college.

Steidel and Contreras (2003) explained that in the Latino community, familial support, and connectedness to parents specifically is an integral part of the culture. For Latinas in particular, parental influence is exceptionally strong (Rayle et al., 2005) For those who have family support and influence, the chances of persisting in college increase. Conversely, as evidenced by Gloria's (1997) study of 357 undergraduate Latina students, those who had lower levels of family support were less likely to persist in college.

Support offered by family in the Latino community manifests itself emotionally as well as physically, and oftentimes family members choose to live in close proximity to one another. Again, this is particularly true for Latinas, and the women in this study are no exception. At an age where other young ladies are going away to college, participants in this study chose to remain at home because that is where they are reportedly the most comfortable. In fact, enrollment at GPCC for these students seemingly had more to do with a need to stay close to family than the superior academic reputation enjoyed by the institution or its existing programs and services. This is evidenced in part by the fact that all seven participants cited the desire to be close to family as a major factor in their decision and/or their parents' choice for them to enroll at this particular institution.

Karina is comfortable living at home and enjoyed the support and security offered by being surrounded by family:

I live with my parents, and I...I have to say that it's a pretty supportive um, environment. Um...it...I mean, our house isn't really that big. We have our living room, our kitchen, and then we...I have two younger sisters and they share a room, and I get a room to myself and my parents share a room. So, um...it's a nice homey environment. I like being at home. (laughs)

Mary had the desire to earn a college degree, but she was initially fearful at the thought of going away to school and doing it on her own. Her fears were dispelled, however, when she realized that she could attend GPCC, complete her prerequisite courses, and then transfer to a four-year institution. She recalled:

What really motivated me [to enroll] was that I didn't have to leave home so quickly. Uh, I felt I wasn't ready and, uh, I wasn't ready to leave my parents, and, um...why not get what I can done here, when it's gonna be the same thing at another university far from home?

Vanessa recounted that her parents were delighted when she enrolled at GPCC, given that it was so close to home.

They were...just like I wasn't ready [to leave home], they weren't ready, either. I needed to have their support and be close. We both did. So, I felt like I don't have to move, it was going to be like constant calling, and less concentrated on what I needed to do, so um, well, my mom was happy, and I was happy, so...it worked out.

Beatriz shared that although her parents were happy with the idea that she wanted to attend college, they were conflicted because it meant that she had to move away from home

because there were no colleges in the town in which they lived. When she talked to them about enrolling at GPCC, however, she reported that, “My mom was happy! Because she was going to have me 30 minutes away...[so] they didn’t think it was that bad. They wanted to be close enough to me so they could offer their support. And I need that....so....it’s good.”

Several participants stated that once their parents were assured that they would remain nearby and that their support system would not be jeopardized by distance, they were pleased with the fact that their daughters had enrolled at GPCC and thrilled with the idea that they would be obtaining a college degree.

The impact of immigration status. Four of the seven students interviewed for this study were first-generation immigrants, two were second-generation immigrants and one was a paternal second-generation immigrant. Although six of the seven participants stated that being a first- or second- generation immigrant had an impact on their decision to enroll and persist in college, various reasons for that influence were provided. Feeling the need to prove something to society in general, wanting to have what others in this country have or simply the recognition that they had an opportunity that their parents did not have to improve their lives through education were the primary reasons offered.

The society in which we live and the way we are viewed by others can have an impact on our thoughts and deeds. Negative stereotypes can lead to what Steele and Aronson (1995) referred to as “stereo-type threat” whereas the threat of confirming or furthering stereotypes can influence academic decisions and even hinder academic performance for those who belong to groups who are victims of negative stereotyping (p. 3).

Mary believed that society in general looks down on Latino/as as being uneducated and was sensitive to that issue. She summed up her feelings on the subject in the following manner:

Well, I just thought that...a lot of Hispanics don't attend college, and I felt that...um, there needed to be more so that...other people would not see us as...you know...that they don't study, or don't do much with education.... So, that got me thinking, and...um...and it made me think that I would be more of a better person if I went to college and got my education, and then I could show other people...those that don't share my heritage...that I can be somebody.

Vanessa, who was a first-generation immigrant, did not like being referred to as Mexican because of the negative stereotype that she believed it held. She's proud of her heritage, but does not discuss it openly with people who do not share that heritage because she doesn't want to be put in the position of feeling as if she had to defend it. Even though she doesn't openly discuss the issue with others, she shared that her heritage and immigration status "is a big influence to stay in college" due in part to the fact that she wants to show others in society that she can be as successful as anyone.

When asked if her status as a first-generation immigrant had influenced her decision to enroll in college, Sonia responded with a similar sentiment. "Yes, definitely. I think because I wanna show them that being an...immigrant can succeed in college and can graduate. Not just work in a...in a...meat plant."

For Sonia, it mattered what other people thought about those who shared her heritage and it had an impact on her actions. For Beatriz, on the other hand, seeing the accomplishments of others influenced her decision to enroll in college. She was inspired by those with successful careers and decided that she wanted the same thing for herself. She explained:

I really want to be someone big in life. And I think that if I keep going for it, like I see um, a lot of American people that are fighting for what they want, like they go to

college. So I want to do the same.

Karina, who came to this country when she was 12 years old, recognized that she had an opportunity that her parents never had while living in Mexico. She stated that her status as a first-generation immigrant:

...was a big part of my decision [to attend college], because my parents weren't able to go to college.... My um, my mom and my dad both uh, finished their GED, but...they didn't have the opportunity to go to college, so I wanted to...um...better myself and be able to have the opportunities that they didn't have and so that...played a big role in my decision to attend college.... It's a big pusher for me to be something better than my parents. And they're happy and proud that I'm doing this.

Paola felt the same way, reporting that being a first-generation immigrant “definitely...motivates me.”

Immigration status proved to be, to one degree or another, an incentive to enroll and persist in college for most of the participants in this study. Several felt the need to prove something to society while others simply wanted to live the American dream. A larger incentive, however, for all seven participants was the overwhelming desire to make their family proud of them and their educational accomplishment.

The desire to make family proud. Each of the participants spoke of their desire to make their family proud, and they felt that they had an opportunity to do that by obtaining a college degree. Rosalinda pointed out:

...a lot of people, like, when we went to Mexico...asked me if I was going to college, and they were, like, proud of me 'cause ..that's good that you're...still getting your education. Because in Mexico, they don't...not really. My cousins aren't going to college,

so like, they're proud of me that I'm going...and getting the chance to.

Beatriz shared that her parents didn't have the opportunity to pursue an education and wanted their children to do so.

My dad and my parents have really pushed me to keep going to college. 'Cause they quit school at such an early age, they wanted me to keep going. So that's why I decided I should go to college. To make them proud.

Mary's father labors at a nearby factory in order to provide for his family. His job is a physical one that requires long hours, and he comes home every night exhausted from the work. He knew that without an education, his children could end up working in the same factory and he wanted more for them. He wanted them to continue their education so they could embark on careers that not only provided a large enough paycheck to support a family, but ones that would make them happy as well. Mary explained it in this manner:

...He would never want us to work in a place like that because he went through it.

And he doesn't want us to go through that. He wants a better future for us. And I want to make my parents proud of what I could do and what I've done so far, so...that's another influence to me, too.

Other participants shared that they recognized the fact that their parents emigrated from Mexico so that they and their children would have better opportunities, and they wanted their parents to be proud of the fact that they took advantage of those opportunities. Beatriz came to this country with her parents when she was 10 years old. She revealed:

My... parents have really pushed me to keep going to college. 'Cause since they quit school at such an early age, they wanted me to keep going. So that's why I decided I should go to college. To make them proud.

Vanessa's incentive for enrolling and persisting in college came from her desire to make those who she felt have provided her with the most support proud of her. She wanted to prove to them that their confidence was not misplaced.

The need/desire to make their family proud was cited by all participants in the study as being of paramount importance in their desire to attend and persist in college. Another issue raised by each of the students was the affordability of attending a community college located close to home.

Because money matters. Many Latino/a students enrolled at HSIs identified low college costs and remaining close to home as priorities for choosing a college, and this holds true for all seven participants. Money matters were named as an important factor for living with parents, enrolling at GPCC and/or persisting in their studies until graduating. Sonia, Beatriz, Mary and Rosalinda all considered the low tuition cost at the community college versus a four-year institution, coupled with the desire to remain with family as being of utmost importance. By continuing to live in the family home, they could avail themselves of the support that family offered as well as keep living expenses to a minimum.

When asked what motivated them to persist with their studies at GPCC, again finances were mentioned. For some, the offer of scholarships was a strong determinant. Such was the case for Karina, particularly because she chose not to work outside the home but rather to focus on her studies:

I think...the biggest [reason for staying at GPCC] is probably the financial. Um, right now. Last semester and this semester have been both paid for um, completely, so my parents haven't had to. My parents nor I had to pay a cent out of pocket at all for me to go here to college. So, um, as long as they're paying for my college, and I'm getting an

education, and I'm getting a degree at the end...well, that's all that matters to me.

Sonia argued that particularly because she was not in a position to support herself at this time, she felt that she had an obligation to her parents to save them any undue expenses. The cost associated with attending GPCC, she reasoned, would be less than half that of attending a four-year institution in another city where her parents would have the added burden of paying for her room and board.

Vanessa stated that she knew a lot of people that went off to college and midway through their studies changed their major, which resulted in a longer stay. Knowing that this had ultimately increased costs, she wanted to avoid that mistake and finish her studies in a timely manner and in a way that minimized costs.

Sources of motivation for persistence and commitment to graduating. For Latinas, parents played a significant role in formulating their educational motivations (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Gandara, 1995; Perez, 1999), and there have been several studies showing that encouragement and support from parents and other family members had a positive effect on college enrollment (Alva, 1995; Ceja, 2001; Sánchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006; Talavera-Bustillos, 1998). Further, if Latinas knew that their parents had high educational expectations for them, they would likely persist with their studies once in college (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Rayle et al., 2005).

With a desire to obtain a college degree instilled in them, coupled with the support offered by family since their enrollment at GPCC, participants in this study had, for the most part, developed a level of self-confidence that many reportedly didn't have at the beginning of their academic careers. According to Hurtado and Carter (1997), this may well have been due to the close supportive relationships that they enjoyed with their family. Hurtado and Carter (1997)

cited several reports, in fact, which argue that Latino/as that are close to family may actually be better adjusted to college life in general (p. 329).

Arellano and Padilla (1996) had a similar finding. In one of their studies, they found that it was the parents who were the most influential in motivating Latino/as to succeed in college due to the unwavering support and encouragement that they provided. In fact, many Latino/as depended on that support from family to develop and shape academic success (Prelow & Loukas, 2003).

Regardless of the reason, whether family has instilled the desire for an education, or simply provide support to children and family members in college, family does indeed play a pivotal role in helping Latino/as prepare for college (Zick et al., 2001; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1999; Lee, 1993; Muller, 1993; Perna, 2000) and persist once enrolled (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002; Benítez & DeAro, 2004).

For those students that may have some trepidation about their ability to succeed in college—and a few participants stated that they had—knowing that they had the support of family and/or friends could have a positive impact on their level of academic confidence. Students in this study all felt that they had the full support of their family and in several cases mentioned close proximity to family as vital to the receipt of that support.

Another issue that motivated several students was their families' notion of gender role expectations. Vanessa and Paola both felt that because some family members or others in the Latino community still held firmly to the notion of (what they considered archaic) gender role expectations, it motivated them to prove that they could succeed in college. Vanessa explained:

Sometimes my [male] cousins are like, well, you can't do that because you're a girl, like, just because I'm a girl doesn't mean I'm not smart enough to be someone in life! To

have a career. Like, um, that's what motivates me to keep on...like my...to prove that girls can be anything and I hope someday there's a woman that will be president....

All seven students interviewed spoke of their motivation to persist with their studies and addressed their commitment to the institution, and many named familial reasons as their primary motivation. In addition, all participants were motivated by career plans that would require them to transfer to a four-year institution, and they all planned to graduate with their Associates degree before doing so. In several cases, those career plans were influenced by parental wishes and in others, the motivation was to enter a career that paid well enough so that they could help the family financially. Again, reasons associated with family were oftentimes provided for the desire and motivation to persist in college.

At the community college level, it is not uncommon for students to take their prerequisite classes and transfer to a four-year school prior to graduating with their Associates degree. These students, however, spoke of the feeling of accomplishment that would be gained by getting their degree from GPCC prior to moving on to the universities that they plan to attend. Although the factors that motivated them to persist and ultimately contributed to their commitment to graduating varied, most all discussed the impact that their graduating would have on the family. “They’ll be so happy,” “My parents are proud of me,” were expressions offered regularly.

When asked how she felt about graduating from GPCC, Mary exclaimed:

I feel excited, and my family’s excited too! I’m basically just happy and proud of myself for uh, getting this far! And, um, I know that when I graduate, I’m...it's going to be a big achievement, and one step closer to where I want to be.

When asked how committed she was to graduating and how she felt about it, Karina explained that she was very excited and very committed. “I’m really excited about graduating

‘cause I’m the first one that will have a college degree for my family. So... I mean it's...it’s a very big thing for me,” she declared.

Sonia was motivated to persist with her studies by the goals that she had set for herself. She shared that her parents had instilled in her the necessity of planning for success so that she could build a good future. As a result, she is now always thinking about her future and the fact that she wants to embark on a career that offers financial stability. She knows that in order to qualify for the type of position she has in mind, it will require her to get a college degree. She too stated that she was extremely committed to graduating, and she's very proud of herself for getting this far. Getting a college degree is a goal that she set for herself, and she saw it as the first step in her career. When she has her Associates degree in hand, she stated that she would then be ready to “go to the next level,” and focus on the next goal.

Rosalinda felt simply that she only had one more year left at school and living at home, so why not finish? Because time has been rushing by so quickly, she reasoned that she would be finished before she knew it—and she didn’t want to interrupt her progress or rush away.

Vanessa named her parents, the HALO sponsors and her best friend who also attends GPCC as those whose help had the most impact on her motivation to enroll and persist in college. Her parents had provided her with emotional and financial support, and the HALO sponsors had cheered her every step of the way through their encouragement and celebration of her every successes. Her best friend had encouraged her as well and studied with her often. She shared that she was very thankful to have these people in her life because through their words and deeds, they played a significant role in motivating her to get her degree. She felt pretty good about graduating and is anxious, “to do it as soon as I can so I can keep going and...finish my career. I'm anxious to [be] finishing my career and be what I want to be.”

Paola and Beatriz, on the other hand, both stated that their motivation to stay in school and graduate was grounded in the fact that the environment overall at GPCC was so welcoming and accommodating. Paola declared:

Um...I think the environment overall in the whole school...[motivates me to get my degree]. It's just really friendly and I feel very comfortable...like when I'm home. It's been only two semesters, and I feel like I've been here attending the college for two years. It feels like I know that place so well. I'm just comfortable. The whole school it's...comfortable. Yeah. Like everywhere I go, it's....good.

Beatriz offered a similar comment. "I guess I like the environment from here," she professed. "It's just...like the people around me. I have a great support system here and at home. And so far I haven't had any difficulties or drama or anything like that. So I like that."

All seven participants declared that their families were pleased with the thought of them graduating from GPCC, which motivated them even more. The words "proud," "excited" and "happy" were heard many times over. Given the closeness that all reportedly had with family, this further inspired them and motivated them to graduate.

Gender role expectations. Although several studies have shown that close ties to family can contribute to educational success, (Attinasi, 1989; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Rendón, 1992; Torres, 2004), family obligations, particularly for Latinas, can sometimes interfere with academia (Sy & Romero, 2008). In the Latino community, it is not unusual—particularly in traditional households—for women to have very specific gender roles and expectations. As previously described, a traditional household is defined as one in which the man generally holds to a stereotypical approach to gender roles; i.e., the man as breadwinner and decision-maker, and woman are viewed as subordinate, dependent, and responsible for all cooking, cleaning and other

household duties and above all have a selfless devotion to family (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Stevens, 1973). This can create the expectation that the women of the household will always hold their needs secondary to the needs of others. For Latinas, these expectations can create a hardship if they wish to pursue higher education because studies could take away from the time that should be devoted to family. Family members that expect those Latinas that are enrolled in college to maintain family responsibilities place a heavy burden on the student. It can be a double-edged sword. Hardway and Fuligni (2006) found that Latinas with strong family ties were more likely to persist once enrolled in college than those who did not have strong family ties, but balancing family obligations can have a negative impact on school and/or the family (Lopez, 1995).

For the women in this study, although several commented about family obligations and the challenges associated with juggling family duties with the demands of college life, only one complained about it, and even then it was only one instance. From the start I was interested in ascertaining whether gender role expectations had impacted participants' decision to enroll or persist in college. Further, I wondered whether gender role expectations from family members had been an issue as well. Of the seven Latinas interviewed for this study, four were born in Mexico and the other three were born in the U.S.; all but one is a first-generation college student (although one has an older sister who holds a college degree), and; two report that they were raised in a traditional household.

When asked whether their gender role expectations had had any bearing on their desire to enroll in college, all replied that this was not the case. The majority of participants felt that being assigned the role of caregiver, cook and housekeeper simply because they were women was an archaic viewpoint and one that they did not adhere to.

Sonia, however, seemed to accept her assigned role without question, although she commented that she did not think it was fair. She explained that although she was raised in a traditional household and her parents believed in traditional roles for women, they were not so outdated in thought that they forbade her from attending school. She knew that the demands on her time would be a challenge for her if she attended school because she would still be expected to help her mother with the cooking and cleaning. Although her gender role expectations did not squelch her desire to enroll, the thought of attending college did give her pause. She was simply unsure whether or not she could continue doing the household chores and still have enough time left in her day to attend classes and complete her homework.

Even though they stated that they did not believe that women should embrace the notion of gender role expectations, four of them expressed concern whether they could keep up with household chores in addition to attending school or holding a job after marriage. Rosalinda commented:

I guess that women have to do, like, twice the work. Because they have to clean, cook, and, um, well, like if you have kids, then you have to, like, work twice as hard 'cause, well, you're a woman, and a guy...they're not the type to clean and do that type of duty like [women]. So I think woman's have to do like twice the work to achieve their goal.

When asked whether their gender role expectations—that is, expectations they held for themselves—had had an impact on their persistence, again, most commented that they did not. The same did not hold true, however, when asked whether gender role expectations held for them by *others* had had an impact on their persistence.

Vanessa believed that as a woman she had to work harder than a man just to prove herself.

Paola and Rosalinda felt the same way. Paola argued, "I don't think a man has to prove themselves like a woman does."

Although most felt that the gender role expectations held by self did not have a strong impact on their desire to enroll or persist in college, several felt differently about their family's gender role expectations and the impact it had on their decision to continue with their studies. Sonia, in particular, had struggled with the challenge of juggling her studies with her duties at home. She told of an incident that she had had with her brother:

We had an argument because he told me to wash the dishes. And fix some clothes for him. And I didn't do either of them, because I was studying for two business tests. And so he just piled the dishes in the sink, and he didn't do them. Even though he saw that I was clearly doing some tests on the computer. He didn't do them. He knew that I had to get to them, you know? It...it made me mad. He even said... He compared me to like, changing the tire, actually, on his truck. He said how am I going to ask you to change my tires...my truck's tire? Like...me asking him to do the dishes was like him asking me to change his truck's tire. And I thought to myself, ok, no...(laughs) That's not the same thing, you know? ...I asked him, why don't you do any [housework], he was like, if I was a woman, then I probably would. (laughs) Because in Mexico, you know, he even says you're nothing like...like our cousins in Mexico, because they do like, absolutely everything. I mean, they clean...do laundry...take care of the farm animals they have and stuff. [And]...my dad is definitely on my brother's side. (laughs) [My mother]... believes that it's a man's world. So it's been drilled in my head that I need to get used to doing all the housework and still having a job because I'm going to find a husband now that will be like...will want me to do everything.

When asked how she felt about that, and how it affected her studies, if at all, she replied:

[I feel] like...I am misunderstood. Because they don't know how time-consuming college is. And so they...still, like...expect me to have...like, um...I don't know how to put it in words. They like...they think that...well, at least at my house, they think that college is not as hard [as high school]...and why is it so time-consuming if it's not as hard? Even though they haven't really...they've never been to college. Like how do they expect me to do both [cleaning the house and studying], you know? And sometimes they are lenient. My parents. I can't complain, because they are lenient sometimes with the household chores, but um....they still want me to get to it eventually.

Rosalina, who was also raised in a traditional household, expressed indignation that she too was expected to fulfill this preconceived role for women. She commented:

They still expect me to clean up and do the woman's duties... I think it's only fair for everybody to do their part and not just...well, just because you're a girl and have to do this or that. Like cleaning and stuff... I feel like it should change.

Vanessa spoke about her extended family and their expectations:

I have family in Mexico, and I have family here. My family in Mexico that are still over there, the guys work. The guys work. The guys have the good jobs. And the kids go to school. Um, the wives are still...since they didn't get an education, they're stay-at-home moms. They do whatever needs to get done.

She added that she would not allow herself to be subjected to a woman's traditional role when she chose a significant other. She wanted to align herself with the type of man who supported her desire to obtain a college degree and career choice:

If I get a boyfriend and he does not support me to keep on going to college, 'cause

it's taking up too much of my time, then I'm sorry, but he won't be there anymore. He's not going to be my other half because I want someone that can support me, and know that I'm going to get done, and it's gonna be the best for both of us later in life.

Mary and Beatriz both shared that their parents wanted more for them than they had, and that they were raised to believe that men and women were equal. They both expressed gratitude that their parents raised them in such a manner, as they believed that it inspired them and gave them confidence that they might not have had if raised in a “traditional” manner.

Perceptions Regarding Academic Environment

College students in general, particularly first-generation college students, do not know what to expect when they first walk into a classroom. They may be apprehensive because it's a new environment or they may be afraid because they feel they are not prepared to succeed in college-level classes. This lack of self-assurance and academic confidence can be crippling and threaten success. Faculty, as the members of the college community that spend the most time with students, can make great strides toward putting these students at ease with a few words of encouragement and by offering support. Various studies have shown that support from faculty has been linked to the success of minority students (Arana, Castañeda-Sound, Blanchard, & Aguilar, 2011; Nuñez, 2009; Robbins & Smith, 1993). In fact, Nuñez (2009) pointed out that positive faculty interactions with students were a strong predictor for persistence and sense of belonging.

In a study of first-year students in a learning community, Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, and Salomone (2002) found that those students had a higher sense of belonging than did other students because they felt comfortable in the classroom and sensed a high level of faculty support. In addition, they viewed faculty as empathetic and understanding. Although this study was done with students in a learning community, the implications are easily transferable. For

students, perception is reality; and the perception of support makes all the difference.

By providing support and encouragement, faculty are in the unique position of making a real and lasting difference in the lives of these students. As is the case with Latina students and their families, feeling a sense of support from faculty can go a long way toward building trust, improving confidence and adding to a greater sense of belonging.

When participants in this study were asked about their experiences and perceptions regarding the academic environment at GPCC, their responses covered a myriad of issues, including faculty enthusiasm and teaching methods, the importance of faculty-student interaction and feeling respected and the benefit of providing positive feedback. I will discuss each in turn and highlight the issues covered by participants.

Faculty enthusiasm and teaching methods. Although it can be said that it is the students who determine the degree of commitment to their studies and the amount of time and effort that they put into their coursework, it is arguably the instructor that controls classroom conditions and activities that make learning fun. Thus, as Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, and Lutovsky Quaye pointed out, faculty are in a unique position of ensuring that students' experiences in the classroom contribute to their overall learning and development (2010). Additionally, instructors have the power to promote or diminish students' level of academic confidence.

Bandura's work on self-efficacy (1986, 1997) as well as the work of others in that area have shown that when faculty hold positive views of students' capabilities and confidence in their own ability to effectively teach their given subject, it can result in overall student achievement.

If an instructor presents a negative attitude in the classroom it can effectively lessen student

interest, cause discomfort or even intimidate students who might already be relatively uneasy about the class and/or their ability to successfully complete it (Hubbard & Stage, 2009, p. 272). Conversely, if an instructor is excited about the subject being taught and presents a positive attitude in the classroom, it can invigorate students and get them excited about the class and subject matter.

Rosalinda offered a comment about the effect that a negative attitude from a faculty member would have for her:

I'd rather be...like go to a teacher when their attitude is cool, and like, they're happy, rather than going to somebody who's mean. 'Cause I wouldn't like to go to a teacher who's had an attitude that didn't care or that didn't like...want to bother ta [sic] help or something.

When participants were asked about their experiences within the classroom at GPCC, several brought up the issue of faculty enthusiasm. Something that I certainly recognized early on in my academic career, and something that several participants pointed out as well, is that a student can easily ascertain whether or not an instructor is passionate about the subject he or she teaches. This passion oftentimes fuels enthusiasm, which [hopefully] is reflected in the teaching methods utilized and the subsequent delivery of instruction, which ultimately results in student satisfaction.

Paola offered, "most of [our instructors] are pretty enthusiastic about what they talk about, which definitely has a big impact and can um...make all the difference, ya know? So that's good." She further explained that if a teacher is bored with the subject matter, then students would be as well. "It's really hard to be um, excited about learning something new," she reasoned, "if the person teaching it doesn't seem to care...."

Karina echoed these sentiments. Although she felt that most of her instructors were excited

about the subjects they taught, there were some that were not.

[A few] instructors don't feel as passionate about what they're doing, um, and you can tell.... So, if they're not passionate for our sake, [they should] at least pretend like they are. Because I think that...that for me is a big...it plays a big, big role in how...um...how much I want to keep going....

The instruction delivery method was very instrumental to classroom satisfaction for many of the participants. Students shared their negative views about classes taught with the lecture approach citing lack of faculty-student interaction and interaction among students. When describing one of her classes that is presented in a lecture format, Rosalinda stated, "Um....like the teacher doesn't really give us an option like to interact with others. Because it's just...you take notes and then, see you next class. It's hard to stay awake sometimes. (laughs) So I probably don't learn as much...."

All seven participants reported that they responded well to those classes taught with a more interactive approach. Karina explained:

[In] my Sociology class...I know there's a lot of interaction.... We talk about everything and anything pretty much in that class, and so, there's a lot of interaction and a lot of debate going on. It's not like...um...an aggressive debate, but more like a friendly debate, and we kind of tell each other well, I feel this way, and the other person's like, well, I can see your point of view and you know, we kind of understand a little bit but here's how I feel. I think it's really nice, and I learn a lot.

Sonia repeated a similar sentiment:

...My teachers have been good with interacting with me and to...with

my educational needs, I feel. [In] my Criminology class ...[the instructor]...does a good job with interaction with his students. A very good job, which is why that's probably my favorite class..... Sometimes he puts us into different groups and we...we get along in that class. (laughs) We do. In other classes we don't really get to have student-to-student interaction. It's just student and instructor lecturing.

Interactive classes allow students to get to know and learn from each other, feel more comfortable and result in increased participation. Vanessa pointed out, “if it's a class like Ethics, you have discussions, then that's when I would get involved in the classroom. Or if it's about arguments that you have to get involved.” Beatriz offered, “Whenever they ask us to discuss, or come up with a solution, that's the way that I like participating.” Rosalinda pointed out that she was happier with those classes that offered more opportunities to interact with others as well. She recounted, “in my Sociology class, everybody, like, interacts with everybody. ‘Cause it's a very social class, so...I guess I like that class. It's pretty fun.” Beatriz felt much the same way:

In my Business Law class, there's a lot of interaction there because um, our teacher, she puts us in different groups and we all talk and try to decide about problems that she asks us to do and things like that.

She went on to discuss how that contributed to a better learning environment for her.

In some classes, and certainly in some instances, it's difficult to get away from the lecture method of teaching. In order to engage students and hold their interest, however, instructors that make a concerted effort to build participation into their lesson plans can see their efforts reflected in optimized learning and higher levels of student satisfaction. Ascertaining what type of delivery system for instruction works best for students will increase overall satisfaction with academics as

evidenced by the students in this study and the comments that they made.

The importance of faculty-student interaction and feeling respected. Yang, Byers, Salazar and Salas, (2009) argued that the classes that better engage students and build excitement about the subject matter were those that offered in-class discussions and increased one-on-one interactions between students and instructors. Positive interaction with faculty and feeling supported ultimately results in a higher probability that students will seek out additional support when needed (Kirby et al., 2004). The impact that faculty interaction has on students in general, and students who are at greater risk of failing to complete their degree in particular cannot and should not be underrated. As Haviland and Rodriguez-Kiino pointed out, oftentimes faculty members are the only representatives of the college community that see and interact with students two or more times per week and as such, they are in a position to be the first to identify those students who are struggling. They can also play a significant role in helping and nurturing students so that they may develop the strategies and the confidence necessary to persist with their studies (2008).

Participants generally described positive interactions with GPCC faculty in the classroom setting. Several cited the impact of instructors smiling and learning their names as well as the importance of being made to feel comfortable and respected. When asked about her interaction with faculty in the classroom, Sonia smiled when she reported, "...they like, take time to learn my name. Like I feel like they respect you if they actually know your name. Or...they care about you...that they want to know...if they know your name." Vanessa offered a similar opinion. "Whenever they learn your name, it shows they care.... [It shows] they want you to learn and be comfortable."

On the importance of smiling and feeling respected, Vanessa offered this about

one of her instructors:

[When] we go in, he's always smiling. Whenever he's talking, he looks at me to see if I'm paying attention but I know that sometimes I just got out of work. I'll be tired and not like I'm kinda falling asleep, but he still looks at me and gives me, like...okay time to get up now. And he doesn't get mad, but he's being respectful and not saying in front of...or going and slamming a book at me...ya know? Instead, he's like he gives me the look, and I know it's time for me to look up (laughs) and get back in the zone. But really, when they're friendly, and when they...they joke around.... They're friendly, and they have a smile on their face...they're easier [to talk to]. And....whenever you ask the question in class they don't make fun of it. [They] answer without making fun of you and that makes me want to ask a question that I don't understand....

Conversely, Mary recounted how difficult it was for her to interact with or even approach an instructor if they didn't smile periodically.

They're more...they're serious [when they don't smile], but they can, ya know...ease up. And, I feel like those [who smile] are the ones that you can come up to and just ask. Or, other than the ones that are serious all the time and...just have that mean look and then...I mean...they may not be, but they just have it and they never seem to smile. It's kind of more of an awkward situation then...you know?

She went on to talk about the fact that although she felt respected by faculty overall, there were a few who she thought had acted as if they believed she didn't belong there because she wasn't as successful academically as some of the other students. She

elaborated:

I do feel respected, which is important. Um, [but] sometimes, well...sometimes... it's different because some just think that I'm not...well, I feel like they think that I'm not smart enough because...I may not get the best grades and...uh...in their classes, so...it, it's sometimes I...I feel like...I mean, I try. I try to do my best. And, it sometimes it just doesn't come to me. And I'm really bad at taking tests. I don't know why. I can know the subject, but when it comes to the test day, then I'm like...uh...it makes me forget everything about what I do...And so, I don't know, sometimes I feel that they may think I'm not smart enough to be where I am now...and they just pay more attention to those who really know, you know?

For the most part, however, students did not convey dissatisfaction when speaking out their interaction with faculty. Many did, however, echo Mary's sentiments about the importance of feeling respected by faculty. Karina offered this observation:

Um...I feel like I'm treated like an adult [by faculty]. So um... I mean, I feel that I'm rewarded when I have to be, and I also face consequences when I have to be. Like my instructors don't baby me, but they're not like extremely harsh on me, either. And they...um...they definitely give me back the respect back that I give them. When, when they talk I don't talk, and when I talk, and I want to talk to them, then they don't interrupt me. They let me say everything that I have to say.

Students also offered their opinions on the need for faculty to interact with them and to be approachable so that they would feel comfortable going to them for help. Sonia explained:

If they don't bother to even interact with me, that would just be...it would just

discourage me in college. Because...I would feel like they don't care...they don't care about my opin [sic]...like how I feel. Even though I'm just one of their students, and they have so many other students....

Paola discussed the positive interactions she has had with faculty thus far:

They make you feel comfortable and [they're] helpful. They're really helpful. It's...that's what makes me want to continue here. Because I know that there's other good teachers and professors..... I want to interact with them...and they're going to help me with whatever I need.

Vanessa offered:

I had a teacher that's willing to explain to me in a nice and polite way and not make me feel like I don't know nothin', and that...keep[s] me going and wanting to keep on going to college because I have that confidence to go ask another teacher when I don't understand this, and I don't want to go get something so that's why I'm coming to you and I know that you can help me out. That's how I think the instructors...contribute to me...if I have nice, polite,...respectful instructors who are willing to help you and support you and believe in you that you can get there.

Students felt that positive interactions with faculty contributed to the desire to persist with their studies. The table below highlights the comments made regarding the impact of faculty interaction on participants' persistence at the institution.

Table 4.3 *The Impact of Faculty Interaction on Participants' Persistence at GPCC*

Mary	...if they interact with students and give 'em that positive vibe of wanting to go forward and um, not just stay where you are now it...it really helps to, uh...continue and want to continue.
Sonia	...if they don't bother to even interact with me, that would just be...it would just discourage me in college.
Karina	So, I mean I think the faculty is a key, a big um, plays a big role. They're key to helping us um, keep going and to push us to keep going to be where we want to be. I've heard of one or two [students] that have told me...you know, this instructor is...has been pushing me and pushing me and, you know, I want to be better because of this instructor because he has helped me. They are a big, big part of...I mean they're...they're the people that we're around most of the day, if not the entire day, so I mean, they do...they're definitely very important.
Vanessa	If...I had a teacher that's willing to explain to me in a nice and polite way and not make me feel like I don't know nothin', then that would keep me going and wanting to keep on going to college because I have that confidence to go ask another teacher when I don't understand this, and I don't want to go get something so that's why I'm coming to you and I know that you can help me out.
Paola	...I know that if I want to interact with [faculty], then they're gonna be nice. And they're going to help me with whatever I need.
Rosalinda	I think [faculty interaction] is important because you have, like, interactions with your teachers, then they, like, influence you that if you're stuck they can help you. And you won't be stuck, because you know that you have somebody there to keep you going.
Beatriz	I think [interaction with faculty is] very important, as they're part of who encourages you to do well and keep going.... I like the idea that some of them are always in their email. So in case like, if I have a question, they answer me right away.

The benefit of positive feedback. It's not only important for students to feel that faculty are approachable so that they will go to them when they need help, but participants in the study reported that it is also important for them to receive positive feedback from faculty. They stated that this feedback inspires them to put more effort into their classes and persist with their education. They are not alone. Studies have shown that students do indeed benefit greatly from positive feedback from faculty (Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Crisp, 2007; Foster, McNeil, & Lawther, 2012; Hernandez, 2012). It's simply human nature to be pleased by reports that one is

doing well...and when singled out by an authority figure that one looks up to—in this case an instructor—then the impact that such reinforcement holds leaves one thirsty for more. Beatriz shared her views on the subject:

Most of my...well, most of my teachers let me know like, how I'm doing in class...even if I don't really want to know! (laughs) Which is a good thing, like, don't get me wrong or anything.... It's like teachers that tell you when you're doing really well...well, that really makes me feel good, ya know? Like when they tell me I'm doing good, or I'm getting better, or I did a really good job on a paper or something... it like, makes me feel good. And especially if I like the teacher. (laughs) Then I, like...I want to hear more! It's like when my parents tell me I done something good...it like, makes me want to do more good. It's not like I look at my teachers like they're my parents or anything... It's just that I like to hear that I'm doing good and...like it makes me want to do more good. It motivates me to do more.

Several studies have documented the fact that continued evaluation and positive feedback from instructors can play a pivotal role in the learning process for students (Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Crisp, 2007; Foster, McNeil, & Lawther, 2012; Hernandez, 2012; Keating, Zybutz, & Rouse, 2012). Although many students may choose not to participate in class, they will choose to actively engage in their assessment, and most certainly take notice when they are assessed in a positive manner (Foster et al., 2012). Additionally, positive feedback and reinforcement from instructors has shown to increase academic self-confidence for students (Colbeck, Cabrera, & Terenzini, 2001).

When students hear that they're doing well in the class on a given project it boosts their academic confidence and oftentimes they strive to do just as well or even better on the next project.

Sonia shared some positive feedback that she received from one instructor that had a great impact:

In...Beginning Algebra class...I had a particular experience with a faculty member...that...motivated me to do better in that class. Which was, um...she recognized my hard work and my progress. And she let me know. Once I was starting to really understand...what was going on or whatever, I started participating more and she noticed that, um, I was making progress. Um... And that made me feel good, which motivated me to do better in that class. Yeah, it made my day! You know, I was really smiling after that. I was like really confident, you know? Because it definitely made me feel good....

Sonia pointed out that in her experience, not many instructors take the time and make an effort to tell students when they are doing well in their class, and she argued that they should:

[When my Math instructor gave me that positive feedback it] definitely made me feel good, and not many instructors do that. They don't like, let you know...um...like they don't let you know that...they don't recognize...they don't let you know that you're doing a good job. Other than grades. They don't compliment you. They don't give you little motivational...statements that are so simple that they could make such a difference in someone's life.

Mary shared that positive reinforcement inspired her to do better as well:

Usually the teachers tend to help whenever you have a question or...they give a positive feedback as in uh, they give you a motivation to move on. To go on out of your way and do what you have to do to get uh...get your degree. And some teachers give a lot of extra time for you to go to their office, and if you need

anything, they give their email and they'll reply back if you need anything.

According to the students interviewed, the vast majority of faculty at GPCC does a superb job of interacting with and motivating the students.

The College Experience Outside the Classroom

Whether or not students feel comfortable with the overall college experience and subsequently persist with their studies is determined by a variety of factors that take place both inside and outside the classroom. For Latino/a students, research has indicated that social support was one of the predictors of decisions associated with academic persistence (Gloria, 1997; Gloria, Robinson Kurpius, Hamilton, & Willson, 1999). Whether students establish relationships, make friends and feel supported by administrators, faculty and staff as well as their peers has an effect on their emotional well-being and ultimately on their persistence and sense of belonging.

When participants in this study were asked what the most important issues for them in determining their overall satisfaction with their experience at GPCC outside the classroom, they cited the importance of feeling respected by and having positive interactions with non-faculty members, the importance of academic advising, the positive effects of membership in groups and their perception of campus climate and sense of belonging as being the most important. Although advisors are non-faculty, for purposes of this discussion I have separated discussions addressing the impact of advisors from the importance of interaction with non-faculty members.

The importance of feeling respected by and having positive interactions with non-faculty members. Participants were asked whether they felt respected by administrators and support staff at GPCC and how important they felt interactions with the two groups were to their decision to continue their education at the institution. With one exception cited by one individual, students reported that administrators and support staff alike made them feel

welcomed, respected and happy to be on campus. Students either stated outright or alluded to the fact that it was important for them to feel that they had the respect of administrators and support staff alike (in addition to faculty) in order to feel comfortable at the institution. “Without the respect of the people walking around campus, I wouldn't feel supported at all or the least bit comfortable,” was one statement made. For students in this study, it's wasn't enough to feel that they had their support—they wanted to feel respected as well.

When students were asked how important they thought interactions with administrators and staff were, they all answered that exchanges with administrators was not as important as exchanges with support staff. The reasoning given by most was simply that they did not have as many dealings with administrators as they did support staff. Although students all agreed that it was important to feel respected by administrators and support staff alike, several admitted that they didn't really know any administrators, nor did they have any interactions with them.

Recognizing that administrators are the leaders on campus, students oftentimes look up to them. Even if they don't always know who these administrators are, students recognize that decisions made by these individuals in positions of power can have a direct impact on their educational experience, and as such, they want to feel that administrators have their best interests at heart. As Paola pointed out, “in order to take care of us and, um, set policies and...make positive things happen...that will help us...they certainly need to respect us!”

The table below highlights comments made regarding whether students felt respected by administrators at the institution.

Table 4.4 Answers to the Question: Do You Feel Respected by Administrators?

Mary	I feel...uh...respected by them. Like, they um, the President usually says hi to everyone when he passes by.... I think sometimes I may look at them, and be like...oh I want to be like that when I have that profession.
Sonia	I don't really interact with my administrators.
Karina	I don't really have much interaction with...um...the administrators, but...we went to a Hispanic day...just recently to [the State Capital]. And, um, [HALO sponsors] were gunna...going to have to take the day off to um, take us to that. They were going to have to take vacation time. But...our President...told them...go ahead and take those kids. So the fact that he um...didn't let them take vacation days so that they could take us, that told me just how much he knows this is important to us. And...just how he knows that we...how we feel about... our heritage and about attending these type of things. So...I mean...I feel really respected by...administrators and I'm really happy with...what they're doing.
Vanessa	I feel like...um...I have been respected, because I don't see them a lot. You don't see like the President or the Vice President a lot. Because you're more like the instructors or the sponsors of another club or... the people at the library. But I feel um...I feel respected when...me, being in HALO, sometimes we have like the Hispanic student day and [the President] is willing to help us out...in opening the ceremony, or opening other events. So he...that shows he cares. And that's...if he cares, that shows me that he's respectful not just to the other people but to me because he's willing to support my race.
Paola	Um...yes. The President is a real friendly person. Even if he doesn't know you, if you are just walking by, he'll say hi or say how are you? How are you doing? So that's...he's pretty friendly. Um, I think it's pretty important, yes. If they're nice, and they're not being discriminating, then I'm going to want to stay here. So, it's been important to see that they are nice and they're...have a good attitude.
Rosalinda	I don't really know any.
Beatriz	I haven't really interacted much with administrators. I think it would be important because they should be part of why you want to keep going to college.

Although not all the students interviewed knew who the administrators on campus were, most felt that interactions with them were important to their persistence. It should be noted, however, that the level of importance regarding interactions with administrators were ranked below that of first faculty and then support staff. The reasoning for this given by several participants was simply because they didn't deal with administrators on a day-to-day basis, if at all.

The table below highlights comments made by students regarding the impact that interactions with administrators had on persistence.

Table 4.5 *The Impact of Interactions with Administrators on Persistence*

Mary	I think [interactions with administrators is] important, but not so important as the...instructors are. Or parents. Because you're with them most of the time.
Sonia	[Interactions with administrators are] not as important as my interaction with faculty.
Karina	[Interacting with administrators is] important, but not as important as, per se, the faculty. Um, so I mean I think it's still important to know who our administrators are and stuff, but um, I don't think it's as important to know them as we do our faculty.
Vanessa	I think [interacting with administrators] would be more important if I would see them more, and get to talk to them more, and know that they're there and know where they're at. Because I don't even know where their offices are located. So I probably, if I know where they're at...then probably it would be pretty important. Because maybe they can be a support and be like, "Hey, look. We have this opening and this scholarship. Or you would be great for this other event." Then maybe that would contribute to me wanting to go to college. But since I really don't see that, or don't know who all these people are, then that doesn't really contribute to me wanting to go to college.
Paola	I think [interacting with administrators is] pretty important, yes. If they're nice, and they're not being discriminating, then I'm going to want to stay here. So, it's been important to see that they are nice and they...have a good attitude.
Rosalinda	I'm pretty sure they're important. I just don't know...have no clue like, how they would...well...continue my education.
Beatriz	I think it would be important as well, since they're part of the college and...but I haven't really interact[ed] much with them.... {But} I think it would be important because they should be part of why you want to keep going to college.

Students interacted much more with support staff on campus than they did administrators. In fact, students who were interviewed cited support staff as those who they relied on most to help them navigate the waters of academia. Although they looked to faculty (for the most part) to help them with their studies, it was the support staff that they looked to for help with the overall college experience. Whether helping students enroll, offering support with financial aid issues, identifying scholarships, assisting in career choices or just offering a smile as they passed by, support staff were seen by students on a daily basis. The participants in this study all cited

interactions with support staff as being extremely important to their persistence. Several stated that it was support staff with whom they interacted with first and in some cases, due to the kindness that they extended, aided in the decision to enroll at the institution. Support staff was named for not only being instrumental in contributing to a welcoming environment for students when they were taking their initial campus tours, but they also helped to put them at ease once enrolled and continue to help with a myriad of issues. Participants all cited multiple instances whereas support staff had made them feel both welcomed and appreciated. As was the case with faculty and administrators, students felt that it was important that support staff respect them.

The table below outlines comments made regarding whether students felt respected by support staff at GPCC.

Table 4.6 Answers to the Question: Do You Feel Respected by Support Staff?

Mary	I do feel respected by them. They're all nice and welcoming. Whenever you ask for help, they're glad to tell you where to go or how to do things. And, um, they don't just...like...say it and then just want you to leave. They...listen to you...to what you have to say, and then they'll provide you with the information that you need.
Sonia	I think I have felt respected, um, by support staff... A specific example is from the secretary of the President. She seems like...very...like, happy. And she says hello even if she doesn't know your name. She...she will like, greet you nicely, and that's always nice. Because you want someone there that will make you feel welcomed...even though you're just going to the business office. Or to the restroom. (laughs) But, she's like always there. Not by the restroom, but by the President's office. (laughs)
Karina	Um...I would say so. I mean, I...when I first enrolled at [GPCC], there were people who...were willing to help me and show me around and, you know, tell me that I needed to take these classes, and I don't need to take these classes...um...where I can go to find federal student aid and this and that, so...I think so.
Vanessa	Uh...I actually have feel supported by the support staff... Every time you go in through the doors, there's the secretary. She's so nice. She's like, "Hey, hi! How are you doing?" She might not know you, or she might... you go past and maybe she remembers your face, I don't know. But she always asks, "How are you doing?" or, "How's your morning?" uh, "Have a great day!" every time you walk in. It doesn't matter if she says hi to you. She always says hi to you. If you go in that door 20 times, she'll say hi to you 20 times. So...she's so nice. The administration ladies are some nice, like, if you have a question about your

	classes, if you have a question about where something is located, they're so friendly that they're willing to help you out. They will help you get your questions answered or whatever you need to get done. They make me feel real welcome here.
Paola	Um, the HALO sponsor ...they've been very helpful. They're always there to help with whatever we need, and...just...the advisors from SSS. My advisor. They're always trying to help me with whatever I need. [The HALO advisors] always help me with the scholarships. Finding scholarships and applying for them. Or just things like that. Just when I enrolled for classes...when I need to go. And they're nice.
Rosalinda	Yes... 'cause they took the time to help me and fill out my FAFSA, so...like I think that they have respect.... Like, everybody seems friendly. Or like when I toured the campus, everybody seemed friendly. Um, they'd smile. They wave. People are really friendly.
Beatriz	Yes. There's a...whenever I go and ask for a copy of my classes and things like that they're always nice. They do what I ask for. Yeah, and like whenever I talk to them, they're nice to talk to. I mean, they're pleasant people who work hard. I know one of the secretaries where I always go in, and she knows my name and talks to me and things like that as well.

Students interviewed cited multiple instances in which they had experienced positive interactions with support staff on campus, and most felt that these friendly and helpful interactions contributed to their persistence. The level of importance of these interactions with support staff were ranked by most as slightly less important as their interactions with faculty, but more important than their interactions with administrators. Because they dealt with the support staff on a regular basis, whether they were going to them for help or merely passing by, their interactions generally had a positive impact.

The table below highlights comments made by students regarding the importance of interactions with support staff on their persistence at GPCC.

Table 4.7 The Impact of Interactions with Support Staff on Persistence

Mary	Yeah, I think that [support staff are] there for us. And we could...maybe...if they follow their role, and how they lead, to create a good environment.
Sonia	[Interactions with support staff is] not very important 'cause they're just um...they're just...in the business office or...(laughs) you know, like in other offices. They're just...they're just doing their job. If I were to interact with them...'cause, in the first place, I don't really interact with them because I don't really go to...to, you know, to the admissions office or to the financial aid office. But...it doesn't really affect my decision in staying there. So...It's nice to like...get a Hello, or when you know, or when you hand them something, or they hand you something, or...you know, just for the support staff to be polite. That...that's nice.
Karina	I think [interactions with support staff is] pretty important. I mean, like the people in uh, the financial aid office. Um, sometimes, most times, like when kids like me that are first-generation in college don't have much of an idea that we can get help. I didn't know that I could get financial aid help to go to college, when I um, was first going to start college. I mean...those kind of people can definitely play a big role in a student's decision to definitely enroll and stay in college.
Vanessa	Well, I think [interaction with support staff is] really important. We have to have...I feel like if we have it...having a support staff helps to know that they are there for you. They care for you even though the people that I am talking about now never even seen me before, or never...they don't know what my life is through, but they don't care about that. They're still there to help me. They don't care if I'm Hispanic if...they don't care. They're willing to help you and do good. So I'm kind of happy that I kind of stayed here because I don't know how it would've been at another college. So I'm really glad I chose to stay here.
Paola	I guess [interactions with support staff are] pretty important. Yeah. It helps when they encourage us to keep on going to college and taking all these classes.
Rosalinda	Um, um...I think [interactions with support staff are] important, just 'cause if you need help...if you don't know anything about FAFSA or like, if you are staying in the apartments, the housing there, they like, help you a lot.
Beatriz	I think [interactions with support staff] should be important as well, because you...if you feel comfortable at a college, with the people around you, I mean, it should be...I mean, I think it should be you should feel like, comfortable with them.

Whether or not students felt that their interactions with support staff factored into their desire to continue their education at GPCC, all cited more than one instance whereas their contact with support staff, regardless of the circumstances that brought them together, had been a pleasant experience.

Mary stated:

It makes me feel happy (laughs) whenever there's people willing to help and wanting to uh, you know, do things. Not for you...but for uh, the things that you need or uh, certain things that they make you just feel happy and good about yourself.

Vanessa summed it up in the following manner:

I feel... that our college has a good staff that is willing to help. At the library, our CLC that's in charge, she has helped me a lot. She's been there for me. She even memorized my name. She's, "hey, how are you doing?" Good. And if I need help, then she makes sure I get help. The librarians are nice. And I feel like if we have friendly people there that are willing to help you even though they don't know your background or they don't know what you've been through...that they're there for you and they believe in you, then that keeps you going. That...you know that if you fall down then there's people there to support you and help you and keep you going with the college situation.

The impact of academic advising. Students reported that their involvement with advisors and their opinion regarding the overall advising experience were positive as well. Although some advisers were more available and engaging than others, all seven participants felt that their academic advisor had played a significant role in helping them devise their academic plans. Kuh (2008) stated that an advisor is not merely the person who advises students on which courses they should take, but ideally one who advises them regarding academic and social integration as well. Students that are advised thusly become more engaged and ultimately take responsibility for activities that require daily decision and action. As a result, students become more invested in the activities that they embrace and their commitment to the institution is enhanced (Kuh, 2008).

Although all participants felt satisfied with their advising experiences, some felt a deeper connection with their advisor. In these cases the advisor was looked upon as more than merely the person that they needed to visit in order to enroll; they became the person the student chose to go to when they had questions about various facets of the college experience. In these cases, students looked to their advisors to provide valuable information regarding scholarships, for help in identifying discounted books and materials, to offer career and educational advice and to act as mentors.

The positive effects of social support in this area were evident. Gloria (1997) and Gloria et al., (2005) stated that students who feel supported by higher education professionals are more likely to persist with their studies. Further, for those students who feel supported by these individuals and also enjoy a strong connection with staff and faculty with whom they consider mentors, their chances of persisting increase even more. Torres and Hernandez (2009-2010) supported this finding as well. Having a mentor on campus leads to feelings of support, well-being and ultimately persistence.

Sonia offered:

My advisor looks for scholarships, and tells me what websites to look at, and he tells me what summer scholarships and major scholarships, and all that good stuff that not like, an average person would know. You know? When I need...when I have a question or something I don't hesitate; I go to him. He helps me... He helps me out a lot with things.

Vanessa shared that even though she'd been assigned a new advisor, she still visited regularly with her previous advisor—who she looked upon as a mentor—to discuss certain matters. She explained:

I am thankful that there's people that know and can help you out, 'cause if I didn't

have someone that could advise me and guide me, I wouldn't know what to do.... I wouldn't even know what's next or where to go. I have a really good mentor. (laughs) Um, she...and my classes were full, so she talked to my teachers about me going...and at least um, hearing, so I wouldn't be behind. So she helped me. I actually got out of the waiting list, so I've pretty much gotten good advice from her...on what things I need to get done, and um, where to get books, and where to go get materials that I need [so] I won't have to spend so much.

Although a few students reported that meetings with advisers tended to be short in duration at times and that advisers could meet with them only for the amount of time needed to help them enroll, they all felt that their needs had been met or exceeded. Additionally, five of the seven participants commented that they had met with a second advisor that they could visit with for longer periods of time in order to discuss other matters as needed and felt that their advisors were the single most important individual(s) on campus that were concerned with their success.

Mary explained that whenever she felt “stuck” or overwhelmed with her studies or simply college life in general, it was a comfort to know that she could meet with one of her advisors and discuss the issue(s) at hand. She knew that not only would the advisor take the time to listen to whatever was troubling her, but that he or she would be sympathetic, wouldn't try to minimize her concerns and would ultimately help her work through whatever it was that was troubling her. She commented:

[It's nice] knowing that um, I have help whenever I get stuck. And I don't have to just...stay stuck. I have somebody to go to that can help me get unstuck. And it gives...makes me feel better than to just be...to feel like I should just forget about it. Or that I can't do it....

The positive effects of membership in groups. The importance of social support can be felt through membership in groups as well. Several studies have shown that social support has a positive influence/impact on Latina's adjustment to college. Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, and Cardoza (2003) found that support received from friends had a positive effect on psychological adjustment for Latinas (Solberg et al., 1994; Zea et al., 1995). Studies conducted by Hurtado and Carter (1997) and Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) found that talking to peers about coursework outside of the class environment contributed to a stronger sense of belonging.

All seven students, no matter how busy their schedules, reported the importance of membership in the organizations in which they participated. One student shared that she was on the drill team and that they practiced five days a week for an hour and a half at a time. Although it was quite a commitment, she felt that it was worth it because she enjoyed it so much and made lasting friendships. Two of the students were very active in the youth groups at their church and one made a comment to the effect that her involvement gave her purpose and helped to deepen her faith. Three of the students were heavily involved with activities sponsored by Student Support Services, which was a very active organization on campus.

When asked about their membership in groups, however, the most impactful responses that I received were regarding participation in the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) on campus, of which all seven were members; five of which were extremely active. HALO was seen by participants as a way to celebrate and share their heritage with others on campus, connect with other Latino/a students, and give back to the community through the community service projects that the organization was involved in.

Mary embraced the concept held by members of the group to help make her community a better place, and she liked to involve herself with the community programs that the organization

participated in. She shared that she enjoyed helping others so much that she was inspired to do more of the same in the future. When asked to elaborate, she explained:

I'd say that...the way that uh, we work together and the way that we provide uh, books for other people too that...that they need...uh, we basically try to make a difference. [The sponsors] want you to be involved as well. They want you to help the community, as we try to do. And it's like a commitment to be...to, uh...try to make a difference.... I like how when...when people help others. So that makes me...uh...want to be...be like that. Or have a position like where I could be able to help other people as much as they do. So, that makes me see a positive thing that I want to do later on in the future.

Participants reported that they had developed real and lasting friendships through their involvement with HALO, and as such, had developed a meaningful support system. The two HALO sponsors were seen as an integral part of that support system. They were viewed as mentors, advisors, supporters and cheerleaders. Paola revealed that they, "...go out of their way to make us feel comfortable, which is very important. They're always trying to make us go in there and talk to them. They're always around to help." Rosalinda reported, "...they've been very helpful. They're always there to help with whatever we need.... [They] always help me with the scholarships."

Participants reported that the individuals that they had met and connected with through their involvement with HALO had had a significant impact on their persistence and commitment to graduating as well. They studied together, encouraged one another, and shared stories of what they wanted to do with their lives. Several students commented that it was because of their involvement in HALO that they had come to believe that they could do whatever they wanted to

do with their lives, and that they would be successful in overcoming any challenge that may present itself along the way.

Karina commented that she and the friends that she had met through HALO have developed a close friendship:

We hang around all the time. And it's just because we've grown a...a bond with each other. I mean, um, going into college I didn't expect...um...to really find friends, because I was always kind of the...I mean, I had friends, but I...there really wasn't any one that I was like close to. So I wasn't really expecting to have that when I went into college. But joining HALO...I mean, I don't just have one or two people that I'm comfortable with. It's a whole group. There's about six or seven different people that I can go out with by myself and I can tell anything to. Anything and everything.... And we just spill our guts to each other. And I mean, it's really nice to have that, so... there's quite a bit of people that I'm close to.... I think it's just the fact that we belong to a similar group and we have similar backgrounds. So we understand each other a lot better.

Campus climate and the sense of belonging. Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that a welcoming environment on campus had a direct impact on Latino/a's decision to persist in college. Those that felt comfortable on campus became more involved and invested in their education. This seemed to be the case with the participants in this study, who all reported that they felt welcomed from the moment they walked onto the GPCC campus. Several reasons were provided for the welcoming atmosphere, including friendly and helpful students, faculty and staff, freshman orientation and help from the sponsors and members of HALO.

Mary and Beatriz both commented on the fact that when they first visited the campus people were friendly and had always smiled at them and said hello when they passed by. They

both felt that students, faculty and staff were all were very welcoming. Mary observed, “...everybody seemed to want to help. And if I felt lost, I would...I could just ask anyone and they’d tell me where to go.”

Sonia and Paola both mentioned the orientation held for new students as a contributing factor in making them feel welcomed. Paola described it as a party atmosphere set up that was designed to share with students everything they needed to know about college in general and life at GPCC. “Different people from different clubs...were giving us information about the clubs and they were giving us um, some gifts, too! And all of the teachers...along with staff were welcoming us.”

Karina was extremely appreciative that staff members took time to answer all of her questions and help her fill out her FAFSA application. She offered, “So that...that really helped a lot in making me feel welcome.”

Vanessa attributed the welcoming atmosphere to the members and sponsors of the HALO organization as well as others on campus. She commented:

HALO welcomed me pretty good. They tried to get me involved and um, they have helped me with things I needed help with. ‘Cause here I didn't have no...none of my high school friends, and I was like, I didn't know nothing. I didn't know the buildings, I didn't know where to go, where the classes were...And they were really friendly and the front people helped me out. The person that gave me the tour was really nice and...and then the teachers...the um, instructors that we saw were really nice and they did help me out too...

When asked whether they still felt welcomed on campus, Mary, Sonia, Vanessa and Rosalinda all replied in the affirmative. They stated that the staff was still as helpful as they were

in the beginning and that several individuals on campus had gone out of their way to engage them and invite them to all sorts of activities. Vanessa offered her thoughts:

I still feel pretty welcome. Um, I don't feel like it's changed, like...I feel like if you earn your respect and you respect others, that still be there. But I haven't seen nobody, like been mean to me or nuthin'. Like, I still go inside those buildings and, um, the ladies um, say hi, and they welcomed me. Even though I don't go there a lot, through those doors a lot, I just go to see my HALO sponsor, so...I feel the same.

Karina, Paola and Beatriz, on the other hand, reported that they felt even more welcomed now than they did initially, because, as Paola pointed out, "...because now I know the people, and I know the school, and the classes. And now I feel like I belong there."

Karina offered her viewpoint:

Oh, I feel a lot more welcomed because I've had the opportunity to uh, bond with more people and more staff, and since I became really involved in HALO, I mean, that plays a big part. I feel like I'm at home there at the college. I am very comfortable. I mean, the campus climate and just the people and the environment is all...it's very familiar to me, so it feels like home. I mean, I'm pretty comfortable with it.

When participants were asked whether or not they felt a sense of belonging at the college, they all answered in the affirmative. Mary, Paola and Karina all stated that they believed that their involvement with HALO had a lot to do with this fact. Karina offered:

Oh yeah.... Definitely HALO has to be a big part of my sense of belonging. They're people who have the same background as me, so we tend to bond really well, and we tend to have a lot of things in common, so that really plays a big role...in my sense of belonging. [The HALO sponsors]...they're willing to work with us and um, they're a great help.

She went on to say:

I feel like [coming to GPCC] is one of the best decisions I've ever made. (laughs) I love...um, I love the two semesters that I have spent here. And, you know, the second semester is almost over with, which is unbelievable! But, um...I definitely feel like it's one of the greatest things... one of my greatest decisions definitely because it gave me an eye-opener pretty much to how um, the University life is going to be, and um, what it takes to...to go on and to continue my studies, and the kind of work it involves.

Vanessa, Rosalinda and Beatriz all credited friends, faculty and staff as contributing to their sense of belonging. Vanessa said:

Yes...I feel I belong here. Like, um, I don't feel like I'm the only one here. I think it's more of...my friends that I have made here, and uh, um, my advisor and my um, instructors too. They...I feel like they're...like they're really good on what they do that has made me feel like I belong here. It's like, I made a good choice by coming here.... I think we really do have a good climate in our college. I feel like they're there for you and they're very supportive of what you want to become, or guide you and help whenever you need transferring, or when it's time for you to transfer. So I feel like we have a pretty good college here.

Great Plains Community College has a very diverse student population and with more than 25% Hispanic enrollment, the institution has received the federal designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Students can benefit from learning about people from other cultures and countries, and the learning experience is heightened when they have the opportunity to interact with those people. In addition, sharing their own culture with others provides students with an opportunity to reflect on who they are as individuals and how they fit into the greater

society in which they live. This interaction and exchange of ideas and cultural norms can be enhanced through curriculum design, and the students interviewed reported that they felt that this was accomplished at GPCC.

Sáenz, Ngai, and Hurtado (2007) maintained that although infusing the concept of the need to embrace diversity into the curriculum is arguably beneficial for all, the truly positive effects that can be felt by it can only be accomplished through in-class engagement with diverse people who hold varying perspectives. So while it appears that classes or programs that offer diversity related approaches or themes have the power to influence student engagement and outcomes, it is the actual encounters with diversity on a personal level that students need and that can ultimately affect positive student outcomes.

Students at GPCC arguably participated in these personal encounters with diversity on a regular basis every time they stepped onto the campus, even though they may not have experienced it when they were absent. Six of the seven participants were residents of the city in which the institution was located, which had a large Latino population. The remaining participant was from a nearby town that had a significant Latino population as well. Although many commented on the comfort derived from the large Latino/a population at GPCC, several remarked on the diversity at the institution and the difference felt in that environment versus their living environment. For many, it was a different experience, yet one that they enjoyed.

Sonia shared that she appreciated the diversity on campus and in her classes, and she was of the opinion that everyone benefited from it. Further, she attributed increased student-to-student as well as faculty-student interaction in those classes that had the most diversity of students. “I think that interaction in my classes are pretty good,” she offered, “um...mainly because there is a di...it's very diverse. [GPCC] is very diverse. And so the teachers aren't

very...like...focused on just one group. They...they interact.”

Although a few participants shared Sonia’s sentiment that a diverse student population was beneficial to everyone, several remarked on the voluntarily separation within groups on campus in general and in their classes specifically. Vanessa commented, “I feel like we all separate in our own races. Like ...Caucasians separate with them, African-American with themselves and Mexicans with themselves or Hispanic with themselves.” Rosalinda had a similar observation and spoke about the dynamic in one particular class. “Um...in my English class...everybody separated themselves, like, with their race. So I really just interact with the people on my side because not everybody talks to everybody in that class.”

Mary commented on this voluntary separation within groups as well, but went on to declare that she thought it was unusual. She explained:

The students...they usually...I've seen in some classes where...uh...there's like...it's not racial...but they prefer to be with their own...uh...like...how do you say...not like their own people, but...like...the same color of skin, you know? So they prefer that, and I've seen it...um...in...like...my... last semester I saw it in uh, like my Math class. There was different...you know, I thought it was weird, because I haven't seen that in a while. And in Chemistry this semester it's like...all the guys are on one side and all the girls are on one side. And...the...umm...like Hispanics are in the back and then the rest are in the front. So...yeah, but um... [I see that] outside of classes as well. You...you just see like their ethnic groups...and um, there's hardly...I...well, I haven't ever seen, like a combination.

Participants named a variety of reasons for this voluntary separation and disclosed that they were active participants in it themselves. This was not so much that they felt the need to push

others away, but rather gravitated toward sitting with friends and people that they felt more comfortable with. Vanessa elaborated:

I'll go sit with my Hispanic friends, because if we don't get it, we'll talk to each other and in a way that we get it, like in Spanish, like kind of translating it...in an easy kind of way. We understand more. We feel more comfortable...like I feel more comfortable talking to someone that knows my heritage and what I'm going through, and that I'm not the only one. And yeah, I talk to other people in the class, they ask me for help, and I help 'em. I ask for them to help if I need it. Like I'm not shy of asking for help, and...or asking them questions to clarify it. But I feel like we all sit with our friends and the people that we feel comfortable with instead of just going to a new table and finding a new person. Like, we're use to the same people all of the time and having them in your class. I'm like oh, we're there...we're there together, ya know?

Whether or not they actually knew that GPCC had an HSI designation, all seven of the students spoke positively about having such a large Hispanic/Latino/a population on campus and communicated how much they enjoyed having so many Latino/as in their classes. Several commented that this “makes [them] feel good,” and the word “comfortable” was used more than once. Various reasons were offered as to why they enjoyed having others with a similar heritage in their classes. Karina was appreciative because, “...we have uh, similar backgrounds and similar heritage and...um..I like that because you have someone to connect with, someone who knows exactly where you come from. So it's really nice.” Paola cited a shared heritage. She explained, “...I think in every class there's Hispanic people. And it makes me comfortable. (laughs) Just to know that there are other people, like, that have the same background and they're in the college....” Sonia enjoyed having others in her class with whom she felt she could relate to

due to their shared views. “I feel pretty good [that there are several Latino/as in my classes.] I think that um, makes me more comfortable,” she maintained, “because they may have the same values, the same... I don't know...the same opinions, ya know?”

Vanessa felt more self-assured and protected. She explained:

I feel more confident because if I don't get something, I have somebody there that can help me that is the same heritage and they know what I'm talking about. So they can help me out; they understand where I'm coming from. So...um...that's why I like having Hispanics in my class. And sometimes I feel more comfortable because I'm not the only Hispanic or the only Mexican there. And... I feel like if they say something, I have someone there that could defend...if I couldn't defend myself.

Beatriz related that sometimes she had difficulty with English, and having others in the classroom that could help explain things to her put her at ease.

I speak a little bit more in Spanish than I do in English, and whenever I like want to communicate more with other people, like I sometimes speak Spanglish (laughs) so, like they understand me a little better. So if I get stuck with a word, on how to say it in English, I will ask them in Spanish and then they help me out.

Although six of the seven students interviewed for this study lived at home with their parents and one lived in an apartment 30 minutes away from hers, participants made mention or alluded to the fact that GPCC had become their “home away from home.” A large part of their comfort level at the institution was due to their involvement with the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) on campus and their interaction with HALO's sponsors and student members, who had become, in essence, extended family. This positive engagement with

individuals associated with that organization, coupled with the community service that the group was engaged in furthered all seven students' commitment to the institution.

Although participants reported that the large Latino/a population in their classes and on the GPCC campus pleased them, some did not seem to be sure that others felt the same way. Hurtado and Carter (1997) found that Latino/a students' sense of belonging, or fitting in, was tied to their perception of the racial climate at the institution. Specifically, students who felt the presence of racial hostility on campus were affected negatively in regards to their sense of belonging. When students were asked whether they had felt discriminated against in any way or if they had ever witnessed anybody else being discriminated against, most said that they had not; however, there were a few instances mentioned, most of which related to unfair treatment by instructors. Mary offered one example:

Um...it feels as if...um... sometimes the...like the Hispanics...they...they uh, don't get that much opportunity than the rest. At least that's how sometimes I feel. Like for example if um, like in [this one] class...the uh, teacher, uh, sometimes he asks for an answer, and the...there's a...there was a Hispanic that, just like, uh, said the answer and...it was the right answer, but the teacher was kind of ignoring him. For...uh...and for somebody else to answer. And then...[another student]... I don't know what race he is, but he was a different one and he said the exact same answer, and he, the teacher, was, oh yeah that's the right answer.

Rosalinda shared another instance:

[One instructor] help[ed] the smart ones first then like, the ones who didn't know. Um, to me, it made me feel like...like I didn't want to take his class anymore. Just knowing that he'll help people who are basically smarter, um...like I don't really

like teachers like that because you're paying them to help you. And just the fact that they don't like, want to help you, I don't know. I guess it sucks 'cause you're basically on your own.

Karina felt that although she didn't see any acts of discrimination, she did see instances whereas she felt people were treated unfairly. She offered her comments:

Um...there's some...there are some faculty that are really good about um, trying to make all their students feel welcome and...um... asking them to participate and making sure that we all feel equal, but then there are other um, there are other instances where there are some certain teachers or um, certain coaches that you can tell that they have favorites. So, it...it kind of makes you question, like, well, what is this really about? Like is this really where I want to be? What kind of environment that I want to be in? So, it just...it really differs. It kind of differs depending on the person.

Although Mary and Rosalinda offered examples of what they perceived as discriminatory treatment, and Karina shared that some faculty members could be unfair, it should be noted that none of them felt that these instances had had a negative impact on their overall sense of belonging.

In spite of the fact that a few students felt that there had been instances on campus that they had either experienced first-hand or witnessed that were unfair or discriminatory in nature, none of the participants reported that these instances had had a negative impact on their sense of belonging. In fact, all seven participants felt an overwhelmingly strong sense of belonging at the institution and attributed that sense of belonging to a welcoming campuses environment as well as their desire to persist with their studies and ultimately graduate.

Summary

Prominent themes that emerged from interviews with participants and data analysis included: (a) the importance of family support and the need to stay close, (b) perceptions regarding academic environment, and (c) the college experience outside the classroom. Sub-themes that were prevalent among those categories included the impact of immigration status, the desire to make family proud, because money matters, sources of motivation for persistence and commitment to graduating, gender role expectations, faculty enthusiasm and teaching methods, the importance of faculty-student interaction and feeling respected, the benefit of positive feedback, the importance of feeling respected by and having positive interactions with non-faculty members, the impact of academic advising, the positive effects of membership in groups, and campus climate and the sense of belonging.

The findings regarding Latina students' views of administrators, faculty and staff as well as their perception of the campus climate at Great Plains Community College (GPCC), a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Midwest, were overwhelmingly positive. Participants felt that administrators, faculty and staff were respectful, helpful and generally supportive overall, and reported that their interactions had had a positive impact on their desire to enroll and persist at the institution.

Although several participants did not realize that the institution had the federal designation as an HSI, all were enthusiastic about the large percentage of Latino/a students on campus and in their classes. Participants reported that they felt comfortable attending classes with others of a similar heritage, and cited their involvement in the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) as key to their academic success and level of comfort and commitment. In addition to a large number of Latino/as on campus, the remaining student population was extremely diverse. Although participants

embraced the benefits derived from learning from those of different races and backgrounds, concern was expressed regarding the voluntary separation that was prevalent on campus.

In spite of the fact that participants enrolled at this particular college because of its close proximity to home, they had all developed and shared a strong sense of belonging to the institution and were highly committed to graduating. GPCC can be held as an institution of higher learning that epitomizes the best practices in a community college offering.

Chapter 5 - Discussion, Implications And Recommendations

This chapter includes a discussion of my research results and is organized in the following manner: (1) the purpose of the study, (2) an overview of the methodology, (3) a summary of results, (4) discussion of the results, (5) recommendations for practice, and (6) recommendations for further research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how perceived support from both family and higher education professionals affects undergraduate Latina students' decision to attend and persist in college. I wished to gain a better understanding of those issues that influence Latinas' decisions to enroll, persist, and graduate college, as well as the challenges that they face while pursuing their degree.

In order to better understand the issues surrounding enrollment and persistence of Latinas pursuing an undergraduate college degree, I utilized Hurtado and Carter's (1997) work regarding sense of belonging as a theoretical framework. Hurtado and Carter's approach not only factors in the effect that campus climate has on a sense of belonging and therefore persistence, but speaks more to the underrepresented student experience. Social support theory was utilized as well in order to understand the importance that social support has on persistence (Sarason & Sarason, 1985). The research questions guiding the study centered on these two theories.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how perceived support from both family and higher education professionals affects undergraduate Latina students' decision to attend and persist in college. I wished to gain a better understanding of the issues that influence Latinas'

decisions to enroll, persist, and graduate college, as well as the challenges that they face while pursuing their degree.

With the growth of Latina enrollment in institutions of higher learning, (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Integrated Post Secondary Education Data System, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics, 2008b) it is important that educators develop a working understanding of the issue or further their understanding of they are already familiar with the concept of the impact that perceived support from both the family and the institution has for students. By focusing on this issue, it is hoped that recruiting approaches and issues associated with attrition and persistence could be developed and/or enhanced. Utilizing a qualitative research design, this study sought to answer specific questions posed in individual interviews in the hopes of developing such an understanding.

A qualitative design was chosen for this study because in order to more fully understand the issues surrounding perceived familial and institutional support among those identifying themselves as Latina, it is important to hear personal as well as cultural stories and understand how these stories helped shape their lives and subsequent views. With this understanding, we become better positioned to assign meaning within the realm of higher education. Several researchers have pointed out that by studying people in their contextual environment, investigators are better able to comprehend how they construct meaning (Creswell, 2013; Guba, 1978; Maxwell, 2013). Further, this design was chosen because it is vital to be open and flexible to change; the research must be allowed to take unplanned turns if an understanding is to be gained and; with this approach, the Latinas under study would be empowered to share their stories (Creswell, 2013). Lastly, because I am not Latina, it was hoped that by utilizing a qualitative approach I would gain additional insight and understanding into the issues under

study by listening to the stories of participants. Although I am familiar with Latino culture, I recognize that I can never fully understand the culture or the challenges that its members' face because I am viewing it through the lens of an outsider.

Because I was interested in hearing from several Latinas so that I could hear a variety of viewpoints, a case study with multiple participants was chosen in order to obtain a more in-depth analysis. Through a case study, Yin (2009) argued that the researcher studies a case within a real-life current context or setting. This approach enabled me to explore the similarities and differences in how perceived support from both family and one particular two-year community college affected seven (7) traditional Latina students' decision to attend and persist in college. A case study approach with multiple participants was chosen specifically because by capturing various viewpoints, it showed varying perspectives on the issues (Creswell, 2007, 2013). As Bogdan and Biklen (2003) and Dillman (2000) pointed out, it is necessary to make sure that researchers sample widely enough so that a diversity of types can be explored.

I utilized purposeful sampling and criterion sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling calls for the researcher to look for specific traits or qualities in participants that would lend a rich amount of information (Creswell, 2006; Koerber & McMichael, 2008), and ensure that diversity in varying categories are explored (Creswell, 2006). Criterion sampling is a logical choice and works well when the people under study have experienced similar occurrences (Creswell, 1998)—in this case, enrolling and persisting in college.

Summary of Results

The key findings of my research include the following:

1. *The importance of family* –The importance that Latinas' place on family cannot be underrated. Within the Latino community children are raised to embrace the family unit

and value family loyalty and this does not change when they graduate high school and attend college. The possibility of separation can lead to anxiety for parents and students alike; and for this reason, students may choose to attend a community college close to home in order to delay separation. Although this close family connection offers comfort and support that is much appreciated, family responsibilities may interfere with the new academic challenges faced by students.

2. *The impact of immigration status* – For students with first- and second-generation immigrant status, obtaining a college education can be viewed as the way to dispel negative stereotypes and prove to society that they matter. Additionally, they may feel a responsibility to family, friends and/or other Latinas in general to obtain their college degree.
3. *The desire to make family proud* – Latinas express an overwhelming desire to make family proud, and feel that they have an opportunity to do so by obtaining a college degree. Whether they wish to honor their parent’s wishes or acknowledge sacrifices made for their educational benefit, closeness to family and the desire to make them proud offers compelling incentive to persist for Latinas.
4. *Because money matters* – Financial considerations are paramount in Latina students’ decision to attend and persist in college. Low tuition costs at area community colleges (versus four-year institutions) coupled with the desire to keep expenses to a minimum can be a strong determinant for enrollment at area schools.
5. *Perceptions regarding academic environment* – A myriad of issues in the academic realm of college campuses are cited by Latinas as holding importance. Faculty enthusiasm and teaching methods, the importance of faculty-student interaction, the necessity of feeling

respected by faculty, the benefits of providing positive feedback are highlighted as paramount for success.

6. *The college experience outside the classroom* – One of the factors important for student persistence in college is a feeling of overall satisfaction outside the classroom. Latinas list the importance of academic advising, feeling respected by and having positive interactions with non-faculty members, and the impact of membership in groups as being the most important.
7. *Sense of belonging* – A welcoming campus environment has a direct impact on a student's decision to persist in college. Those who feel comfortable on campus become more involved and invested in their education. Factors considered by Latinas that provide a welcoming atmosphere include friendly and helpful students, faculty and staff, freshman orientation and help from the sponsors and members of HALO.
8. *Sources of motivation for persistence and commitment to graduating* – In order for students to persist in college until obtaining their degree, they must be motivated and committed to the institution. For Latinas, motivation may be achieved by realizing goals, holding a desire to make others—particularly family—proud or derived through satisfaction with a welcoming campus environment.
9. *Gender role expectations* – Although Latinas in this study felt that gender role expectations prevalent in the Latino community are archaic in nature and do not impact college enrollment, some seem to accept their assigned role without question, though complaining that it is not fair. Additionally, others wondered how they might be able to work, go to school and keep up with housework if they marry before they finish their degree.

Discussion of the Results

The overriding question that guided this study was:

What are the factors that contribute to enrollment sustainability and completion of a degree at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution for Latinas?

Students new to academia are in transition and as such, may feel marginalized and that nobody in their new environment cares for them (Schlossberg, 1989). This can be true especially if they know few people on campus. When students feel self-conscious and/or that they don't matter, it can affect them socially and emotionally and result in greater academic stress (Sand, Robinson Kurpius, & Dixon Rayle, 2005). Even if the student attends school close to home, building a new social network can be a stressful undertaking (Feldman, 2005; MacLennan & Dies, 1992; Reischl & Hirsch, 1989; Sand et al., 2005). Getting involved, and constructing a new support system is key.

The work of Hurtado and Carter (1997) centered around determining the effectiveness of student participation in a variety of academic and social activities as well as membership in various communities and organizations on the college campus. They sought to understand which activities and memberships contribute to or have an impact on students' feelings of 'fitting in' to college life. Specifically, their work studied how students' transitional experiences and perception of campus racial climate influenced their sense of belonging. The set of research questions utilized in this study addressed each of the issues that contribute to a sense of belonging, and a set of sub-questions designed to ascertain students' overall sense of belonging were asked during individual interviews.

Research Question #1

Ease of Transition

What personal factors have changed or evolved since the transition from enrollment to persistence for Latinas?

Hurtado and Carter (1997) maintained that there are three elements that help students' transition to college life: *separation and maintenance of family ties, managing resources and cognitive mapping, or "getting to know"*. For the students in this study, enrollment at GPCC seemingly had more to do with the ability to stay close to family coupled with the affordability of tuition rather than the superior academic reputation enjoyed by the institution or its existing programs and services. When students were asked what motivated them to enroll at this particular college, some of the responses included, "...I didn't have to leave home so quickly", "Well...my home is closer to here, and my um, my financial situation too", and "since it's like just 30 minutes away from home, and it's uh, more cheaper than going to other ones, I decided to come here".

The thought of going off to college and leaving family caused some students to feel anxious, and given the discussions surrounding how their parents felt about the matter, I can surmise that the same could be said for their parents. For most, if not all of these students, one of the major determinants for attending a college close to home, I believe, was the desire to avoid separation from family or to at least to delay it for a while. For several, college life afforded their first opportunity to venture out on their own and the thought of venturing out too far was a scary one. The tether to parents and family made them feel safe and secure. Once they gained more confidence as time passed, they made more connections on campus and built their own support system there, which ultimately had the effect of easing that transition.

The transition to college life for these students was made easier by the welcoming environment on the GPCC campus. All seven participants responded that they felt welcomed

from the moment they set foot on campus. Two participants attributed freshman orientation, which was held the first day of school as an activity that made them feel welcomed, and all seven discussed friendliness of administrators, faculty and staff as contributing to an overall welcoming environment.

Once enrolled, support staff helped participants find those programs and services designed to meet their needs, and students ultimately learned how to manage resources on their own.

Vanessa commented:

I felt welcomed.... HALO welcomed me pretty good. They tried to get me involved and um, they have helped me with things I needed help with. 'Cause here I didn't have no...none of my high school friends, and I was like, I didn't know nothing. The person that gave me the tour was really nice and helped me out.

Rosalinda felt welcomed, “because...a lot of people were, like, nice...and being nice made me feel welcome. [Additionally] a lot of people would invite you to go to things that are happening around campus.”

In the case of these seven participants, due to the fact that GPCC was close to home, there was no real “separation” per se, as they were not required to leave family to attend college and therefore could easily maintain family ties—particularly because six of them still lived at home (and the seventh lived a mere 30 minutes away). Becoming acquainted with the campus, or “getting to know” was made easier with a friendly and accommodating faculty and staff. When students were well acquainted with the academic process they were in a position to manage resources on their own. Personal factors that changed or evolved since the transition from enrollment to persistence, then, for these participants, was an increased sense of comfort in their ability to navigate the waters of college life, a heightened sense of confidence in their ability

to succeed and perhaps a bit of independence that will serve them well when they transfer to a four-year institution.

Research Question #2

Campus Climate

What personal factors influence Latina's perception of a welcoming environment on campus?

Hurtado and Carter (1997) maintained that for Latino/as, student participation in various activities coupled with the perception of campus climate were factors that contribute to feelings of 'fitting in' to college life. Hurtado (2007) offered a definition of campus climate as, "a measure—real or perceived—of the campus environment as it relates to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions" (p. 1). Latino/as that feel comfortable on campus become more involved and invested in their education (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Because the participants in this study all stated that they had felt welcomed from the moment they set foot on the GPCC campus and since that time have become involved in college activities, this study supports these findings.

Participants felt welcomed on campus for a variety of reasons, naming friendly and helpful students, faculty and staff, freshman orientation and support from the sponsors and members of HALO as the most impactful. For some, the power of a simple friendly greeting made a great first impression. "When people passed by they [said] hi, and it felt good...." was one of the comments offered. Two students spoke about the welcome they received at freshman orientation. When the president of the college showed up and introduced himself and extend his greetings and then introduced faculty and staff in attendance, students immediately felt appreciated and engaged. Several participants reasoned that because they all took the time to be

there, it showed that members of the GPCC community were all glad that they were there, and that they were committed to helping students succeed.

Students stated that they were asked to get involved on campus right away, which Hurtado and Carter (1997) argued is vital for persistence. Vanessa reported that the two HALO sponsors welcomed her and got her involved with the organization from the beginning, which gave her a sense of importance and belonging.

Few students realized that GPCC had the federal designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), yet all seven participants spoke positively about having such a large Hispanic/Latino/a population on campus, and each communicated how much they enjoyed having so many Latino/as in their classes. Comments included, “it makes me more comfortable”, “ I like [it] because you have someone to connect with...”, and “I'm happy for that. I feel more confident...” Additionally, two students remarked that they were pleased with increased Latino/a enrollment because it meant that more who shared their heritage were pursuing an education. Mary, for instance, observed that she felt pretty good about the high percentage of Latino/a enrollment because, “there's not very many who want to continue on studying or they just give up because it's too hard...so I feel good that there's more of us.”

In addition to enjoying a large Latino/a enrollment in the school and representation in classes, students had positive comments about the diversity on campus overall and the learning opportunities it brought. Vanessa shared:

In um, in the class that I was...we had a lot of diversity. We had a girl from Somalia, we had a girl from Vietnam, we had African-Americans and um, Asians and like all this type of, um, diversity. And I think we like, got along really well. And it was interesting to talk to each other, like to know from our different countries like that. How we did stuff.

It is interesting to note that in a study conducted by Johnson et al., (2007), it was found that Latino/a students were the only racial/ethnic group for which interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds was significantly related to their sense of belonging, so I was not surprised to hear how much students enjoyed the diversity on campus.

There was also a general feeling among participants that administrators, faculty and staff embraced diversity as well, as evidenced by curriculum design and activities on campus. The fact that they celebrated Cinco de Mayo and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day were cited as evidence that such was the case. When students were asked to provide further accounts of ways in which diversity was embraced on campus, however, they offered only instances in which classroom interaction took place. No other campus activities were mentioned.

Although students felt that diversity was celebrated on campus, a few felt that this was not always the case in the classroom—particularly if there was little or no student-to-student interaction built into instructional design as was the case with classes offered in a lecture format. Students commented that failure to offer interaction with the diverse student population enjoyed in the classroom was a missed opportunity. When asked whether they spoke to their instructors about the issue, or if they had offered a suggestion to include more class interaction in order to promote the benefits of student diversity, none had done so.

In spite of the fact that participants claimed to enjoy interacting with those of different races and cultures, it was interesting to note that when given the opportunity to do so by sitting next to someone in class that fits such a description or voluntarily interacting with others on campus, neither they nor other students at school reportedly took advantage of such an opportunity. The students claimed that this was not so much that they felt the need to push others away, but rather because they gravitated towards sitting with friends and people that they felt

more comfortable with.

As I pondered these two notions that were so contradictory in nature, I was initially struck by the absurdity of it. How can students claim to desire increased interaction, yet avoid doing the very things that would bring it about? Upon further reflection, however, it occurred to me that when I enrolled in college as a non-traditional student in my late 20's, I felt more comfortable in those classes that had students my own age. Sharing the room and the experience with someone who had returned to school after an absence of ten years or more as I had provided me a sense of comfort and I felt an instant camaraderie with them. Although I enjoyed interacting with the younger traditional students, I didn't initially seek them out in class or during social activities on campus. Although my experience was markedly different than that of the participants in my study, when viewed in this manner I felt that I could better understand their inaction. Regarding the opinions offered by the two students expressing feelings of satisfaction that other Latino/as were pursuing their degrees, however, I have no point of reference, as I do not recall at any time during my undergraduate years feeling thankful that other individuals of my age were pursuing their degree.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) maintained that if students experience discrimination, exclusion or racial tension or conflict, it negatively influences their sense of belonging, which in turn has an adverse impact on persistence. When asked whether they had experienced any discrimination first-hand or witnessed any discrimination directed at others, the majority of students answered that they had not. Mary was not among them, and referenced two examples that she felt were discriminatory in nature. She shared that in one of her classes, the instructor on one occasion ignored a Latino student when he offered the correct answer to a question that was posed. Another student who was of a different race provided the same answer and was given

credit for it. When asked whether the instructor might not have heard his answer, her reply was that this could not have been the case, because the student had repeated the answer several times, each time stating it louder than the last. She reported that she, along with others in the class believed without a doubt that the instructor was simply ignoring him for reasons they could not comprehend.

The second instance that Mary recalled involved members of the library staff unfairly singling out Latino/as who assembled there on a regular basis to admonish them for being too loud. She explained that there was a section in the library where students were allowed to congregate for the purpose of studying together, and many did so on a regular basis. She shared that it was not uncommon for students, when debating a specific issue or merely getting carried away with the conversation at hand, to get a little loud. She offered that this happened with different groups on a fairly regular basis—however, she felt that Latino/as were singled out as the only ones being reprimanded. In addition, she recounted that they were addressed as the HALO group:

Just because we're Hispanic, we're not...we're not all in HALO, and it's not that group. They don't have to be like, that's HALO.... And just because we're friends, doesn't mean that we're all HALO. And they...they made us feel like it, uh...kind of like it was discriminating. And um...so I felt like that shouldn't happen.

I found it interesting to note that in spite of Mary's accounting, when asked whether she felt respected and valued by the support staff at the institution, she replied in the affirmative. She further stated that she believed there was a positive campus climate overall and that she had a strong sense of belonging (due primarily to her involvement with HALO). I am therefore unsure whether these instances were of little significance to her, or that they simply had no lasting

impact overall. I would surmise that it's the latter of the two.

Two other reports of discrimination were recounted during interviews. In both cases students felt that instructors had played favorites. One participant noted that she had an instructor who interacted better with African-Americans, and another felt that an instructor favored those students who were “smarter” and performed better with the subject matter. Upon further reflection, the student who complained about the instructor favoring the brightest in the class thought perhaps this should be regarded as unfair treatment rather than outright discrimination. In spite of these accounts, all seven participants reported overwhelmingly that they felt respected by faculty and support staff alike. As with Mary, these instances had little or no impact on students’ perception of campus climate or their sense of belonging overall.

I would never try to minimize any concerns from students that even hinted of discrimination or unfair treatment, but that said, it does appear that these are isolated incidents that are not an indication of a greater problem. In fact, these occurrences seem to have had no lasting effects for those who made mention of them.

With the exceptions cited above, participants reported that faculty and support staff alike made them feel welcomed, respected and happy to be on campus, and therefore contributed positively to their sense of belonging.

Students reported that they felt respected by administrators as well, even though several stated that they had little or no interaction with them and/or didn't know who any of them were. The fact that key administrators showed up for orientation and made appearances at other college activities on a regular basis seemed to be enough—although two students stated that they would like to have more exchanges with administrators. As is the case with participants expressing an interest in having more interactions with those of different races and cultures, they do not seem

to be interested enough to seek out administrators or call for more involvement on their part. Perhaps this is because students are intimidated by those in positions of power or may feel that they are alone in their beliefs. Either view held by a student could result in her/his decision to remain silent.

When students were asked whether they felt valued at GPCC and whether they still felt as welcomed as they did when they first arrived on campus, in both instances students replied that they did. In fact, two students commented that they felt even more welcomed now than they did initially because they've come to know more people. If these two students felt more welcomed on campus now because they had come to know more people, I wonder whether this would be true for others as well. If such was the case, students would do well to push themselves out of their comfort zone and meet/interact with more people. They could start by sitting with those that don't share their heritage or those that they don't already know. Additionally, administrators, faculty and staff could devise ways in which to engage students in programs and services that would be conducive to meeting and interacting with others.

Research Question #3

Campus Climate

What institutional factors influence Latina's perception of a welcoming environment on campus?

When students were asked about their experiences and perceptions regarding the academic environment at GPCC, the responses most often cited included the importance of being made to feel welcomed and feeling respected, the necessity of positive interaction with faculty, utilizing teaching methods that encourage participation and interaction with instructors and students alike, the benefit of providing positive feedback, and the impact of instructor

enthusiasm.

Interaction with faculty—particularly for students who are at greater risk of failing to complete their degree—is vital to persistence. Given that faculty see students on a regular basis and interact with them more often than any other member(s) of the college community, the average student thinks first of her/his instructors and classes when asked about the overall college experience. The importance of faculty at the community college level where an open-door policy is the norm, I would argue, cannot and should not be undervalued. Unlike professors at colleges and universities that teach students who had to meet certain academic requirements to be accepted and are [most often] well prepared to succeed academically, the instructor at the community college level teaches those who oftentimes are ill-prepared for college level courses. At the community college where I was employed, for instance, the vast majority of students tested into one or more developmental classes. Add to that students whose first language may not be English and are the first in their family to attend college, and it can be inferred that the instructors of such students are called upon to do more than teach the subject matter; they need to be motivators, cheerleaders, advisors and mentors as well as teachers. Students look to them for more than mere instruction.

Faculty at GPCC, for the most part, seemed to be up for the task. Participants generally described positive interactions with instructors in the classroom setting. Several reported feeling pleased when instructors smiled at them and learned their name. As reported when discussing the level of comfort students felt at the college and their perception of campus climate, a lot can be said for the power of a smile. This may seem like a small thing to some, but when we reflect on how it feels when someone smiles at us or calls us by name, it makes perfect sense. When somebody smiles at you, it puts you at ease. It makes you feel welcome. Further, if somebody

takes the time to learn your name, it sends the message that you matter to that individual.

When asked what other factors make an instructor approachable, comments included, “a good attitude,” “cracking jokes,” and, “encouraging [students] to come and sit for some one-on-one time with them.” The general consensus was that if instructors were not viewed as friendly, they were not considered approachable. For the students included in this study, some of whom shared that they were initially afraid that they might not succeed in college and that thought had filled them with anxiety and trepidation, we can infer that helping to put them at ease by behaving in a friendly manner is vital to their academic success and persistence.

I reflected again on my undergraduate college experience when considering these comments and recalled the fear I felt when I walked into my first class. I wondered if I would remember how to study and if I still had what it took to succeed academically. I was immediately put at ease when my professor smiled at me, introduced himself, welcomed me to class and asked my name. This particular professor cracked jokes on a regular basis and encouraged us to come see him during office hours if ever we were in need of additional instruction. Because our interactions were so positive, I had no problem whatsoever approaching him when I needed assistance with a project assigned in class.

Smiling at students and being friendly toward them in an attempt to put them at ease is such a small thing and requires minimal effort on the part of an instructor...yet it constantly amazes me how many instructors fail to do so. Apparently several faculty on the GPCC campus do, however, as evidenced by the fact that classroom interactions were generally seen as positive. Comments included, “they’re respectful,” “they’re friendly and offer support when needed,” and, “if I have a question, I can ask an instructor, and they’re willing to help me right away.” Students reported that faculty with this kind of attitude were easier to approach when help was needed.

Although most students felt good about classroom interactions with faculty, there were a few that raised issues that caused them concern. Mary, for instance, stated that she was sometimes afraid to approach instructors with a question when they expressed that she should have learned the answer in high school. She explained that in the high school she attended, she felt that she did not always receive quality instruction, and argued that this was not her fault, nor should she be punished for it. When she asked a question in one of her classes, she was made to feel belittled and disrespected when the instructor informed her that she should already know the answer. As a result of this experience (that she stated left her feeling humiliated), it not only had a lasting effect and instilled a fear of approaching that instructor ever again, but fueled an anxiety for approaching other instructors as well. Even though the instructor felt that way, it is unfortunate that his response served to embarrass the student. Had the instructor been more sensitive, the matter could have been handled much differently. In a situation such as this, the instructor might have asked that the student speak with him after class, and then suggested she go to tutoring to get caught up to speed, or simply have taken the time to answer/explain the original question posed.

As an instructor at a community college myself, I too have been shocked and appalled with the level of ill preparedness of some of my students. In all my classes I required students to write a research paper and was stunned to learn how many had never done so. I found myself faced with the necessity of outlining the basic components of a research paper, how to conduct research, cite sources and avoid plagiarism. I was initially annoyed that I had to take time to do this, but considered that it wasn't the students' fault that they had never been taught. I eventually looked upon it as a challenge and viewed it as a way in which to help my students succeed.

Another participant complained that a faculty member seemed to be more willing to cater

to the students in class that had a better working knowledge/understanding of the subject matter. Given that she was struggling in that class, she felt intimidated by his behavior and expressed concern regarding whether she could ever feel comfortable enough to go to the instructor and ask for help.

All of the students interviewed for this study maintained that their interactions with faculty remain the single most important element regarding campus climate that affected their desire to persist with their studies. Given the importance placed on this interaction, faculty should endeavor at all times to remain supportive and kind in their interactions with students.

Participants reported also that they benefitted greatly when they received positive feedback from their instructors. Several inferred that this feedback not only provided them with increased academic confidence, but motivated them as well. As a result, students offered that they were inspired to put more effort into their classes. This finding was not at all surprising. As a mother, I can attest to the effects of positive reinforcement. The probability of desired behavior being repeated increases with the stimulus of positive reinforcement. When faculty utilizes positive reinforcement in the classroom, the appropriate academic behavior is often the reward (Akin-Little, Eckert, & Lovett, 2004). Thus, when instructors take the time to provide feedback other than mere grades, students have a better indication of standing. When that feedback includes encouraging comments regarding what the student is doing right, the common reaction is to engage in more activities of that nature so that more desirable comments will be received. Students appreciate it when a faculty member recognizes her/his efforts and/or improvement.

Participants maintained also that although they enjoyed the diversity of students on campus and felt that it was reflected in the curriculum and in most classes, several remarked on the fact that in those classes whereas student interaction was limited or nonexistent, they felt that they did

not learn as much about the subject matter or each other. A few made comments to the effect that time spent in classes with no interaction were a waste of time and a wasted opportunity for instructors to engage and energize students about the subject matter and the class itself. The majority of participants commented that in classes presented in a lecture format, they did not learn as much about the subject matter, they did not learn about each other and varying viewpoints, and quite frankly, they were usually bored.

Recall that Sáenz et al., (2007) pointed out that the truly positive effects of diversity can only be accomplished through in-class engagement with diverse people who hold varying perspectives. When taking into account the wishes of participants, this study seems to support that supposition. Students overwhelmingly commented on the benefits of classroom interaction. Classes that were cited as favorites were ones that provided students with opportunities to discuss various issues and solve problems/challenges posed by the instructor. Students felt that those classes that included opportunities for group work and various activities that required interaction and active engagement were more fun and ultimately more conducive to learning the subject matter.

Given the tendency for students to sit with friends and limit interactions with others when left to their own devices, faculty should endeavor to design classroom activities in such a way as to promote interactions with individuals from differing backgrounds. Students will benefit from hearing the views of others as well as meeting and interacting with their fellow students.

Lastly, several students commented on the benefits of taking classes from those faculty members who were enthusiastic about the subject matter. Comments were made that when this was not the case, that is, when instructors were seemingly not at all excited about the subject, it was difficult for students to get inspired. “If the instructor doesn’t care about what he’s teaching,

why should I?” was a comment made about the matter. Students felt that even if instructors were not excited about the lesson plan in particular or the subject in general, they should act as if they were.

I have a tendency to agree. I too have had to endure the musings of a professor who had long since lost his passion for the subject matter, and quite possibly teaching in general. The class was unbearable, and students dozed on a regular basis. Had that instructor even *acted* as if he cared, the outcome might very well have been a different one.

Research Question #4

Sense of Belonging:

How do Latinas perceive their academic experiences outside of class?

Hurtado and Carter (1997) argued that, “studying a sense of belonging allows researchers to assess which forms of social interaction (academic and social) further enhance students’ affiliation and identity with their colleges” (p. 328). Individual perceptions of a welcoming environment on campus have an impact on students’ commitment to the institution and subsequently their desire to graduate. This research showed that the likelihood of students persisting with their studies increases when they are engaged in college activities. The findings from this study support that research. For example, several participants avail themselves of the programs and services offered at the institution, and as such, have become more invested in their education and are committed to graduating.

When participants were asked what the most important issues for them in determining their overall satisfaction with their experience at GPCC outside the classroom, they cited the importance of academic advising, the effect of feeling respected by and having positive interactions with non-faculty members, and the impact of membership in groups as being the

most significant. (Note that a discussion regarding the impact of group membership appears in the following section, so will not be examined at this time).

Research indicates that ideally college students should absorb themselves into campus activities (Nevarez & Rico, 2007; Nora & Ramirez, 2006; Torres et al., 2003). Because most students move away from home to attend college and this is not the case with the participants in this study, it could be argued that it is more difficult to engage these students when they are not on campus on a full-time basis. Although one student had an apartment close to the institution, which was 30 minutes away from her parents' home, the other six participants still lived at home with their parents and siblings. Although many report that they spent time in the campus library in order to do homework, for the most part the majority of participants were not on campus throughout the day.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) argued that members of the college community should strive to engage students at the onset in a purposeful and meaningful way, which seems to be the case at GPCC. Students reported that they were recruited almost immediately after enrollment to participate in campus activities and to avail themselves of the programs and services designed to meet their needs. In spite of the fact that this was a typical student population that might not be active on other college campuses, the staff at GPCC seemed to have found a way to involve students at their institution.

Several students qualified for and were actively engaged with Student Support Services (SSS), and those that were spoke highly of their interactions. They committed to community service and worked with SSS staff to research possible careers and four-year institutions that offered programs in their preferred area of study. They involved themselves in other pursuits as

well, and students seemed to enjoy the plethora of activities offered. They reported that SSS staff were helpful with answering all questions related to the college experience.

Participants spoke at length about their involvement with other advisors as well, and reported positive interactions with them and the advising experience overall. Although some advisers were more available and engaging than others, all seven participants felt that their academic advisor had played a significant role in helping them develop their academic plan. Additionally, several students felt that their advisors had gone to great lengths to be accommodating and provided support on other issues related to the college experience. Because of this additional help, some students reportedly felt a deeper connection to their advisor. In these cases the advisor was looked upon as more than the person that they needed to visit in order to enroll; they became the person the student chose to go to when they had questions about challenges and issues they faced that impacted academia.

Faculty and staff at GPCC appeared to be quite accommodating to students. Participants often had two advisors: faculty advisors (or in some cases Student Support Services advisors) and advisors for enrollment, or academic advisors.

Mary shared that she was more comfortable with her College Skills instructor, and asked if she could take over in an advisory capacity. She was pleased when her instructor, “basically just changed it in the computer.” She was happy that this had taken place because she had failed to connect with her previous advisor.

Vanessa had a similar experience and reported that although she was assigned to a different advisor, she continued to go to her previous advisor for help, and that this advisor made it a point to accommodate her as well. Vanessa was extremely grateful that her previous advisor

still took time to meet with her. It made her feel welcomed and contributed to her sense of belonging and commitment to the college.

Beatriz explained that she too had had a great experience with her advisor. Her advisor not only told her what classes she needed to take, but she explained why she needed to take them and provided reasoning for taking them in the order prescribed. For Beatriz, this spoke to her desire to understand the process and feel valued as a consumer. By having the process explained to her in great detail, she understood it better herself and was better positioned to explain it to her parents.

I find it both interesting and refreshing that faculty advisors and advisory staff seem to place the needs of students high enough on their list of priorities that they will go out of their way to make sure that students are accommodated and comfortable with the overall advising experience. It is important for students to connect with their advisor(s) so that she/he will go to them when needed. A myriad of problems can arise when students are averse to seeing their advisor. These issues may include but are not limited to: missing important deadlines for enrollment; enrolling in the wrong classes; taking classes in the wrong order; taking classes that are not needed; enrolling in classes that don't transfer to the institution that they wish to attend; or graduate with too many credit hours (or too few and not have enough credit hours to graduate).

Students reported that their interactions with support staff overall was extremely positive. Three students shared that the tutoring they received in the Tutoring Center was superb. They stated that the staff there were knowledgeable and caring, and because of this fact, all three declared that they would not hesitate to return as needed.

Perhaps the reason that students did not count interactions with faculty as important issues in determining their overall satisfaction with their experience at GPCC outside the classroom is that interactions with faculty outside the classroom are for the most part described as either limited or nonexistent.

Research Question #5

Sense of Belonging:

How does membership in religious or social organizations influence a sense of belonging at the institution?

Research has highlighted the effects of campus climate as a key component in creating a sense of belonging for students via the perception of inclusivity (Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1998; Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006; Milem et al., 2005; Nevarez & Rico, 2007). The results of this study support this research. Participants' perceptions of the campus climate at GPCC were overwhelmingly positive. Students reported that they felt a part of the institution and were committed to graduating. The reason for their psychological attachment and subsequent sense of belonging to the institution was due in a large part to their involvement in various social organizations on campus. When the participants in this study were asked what the most important issues for them in determining their overall satisfaction with their experience at GPCC outside the classroom were, they cited the impact of membership in groups as being one of the most important.

All seven students, no matter how busy their schedules, reported the importance of membership in the organizations in which they participate. One organization in particular, however, the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) was cited again and again by all students as being of paramount importance. The two sponsors of that organization were

mentioned many times over by all participants as being instrumental in not only the success of the organization, but influential in their involvement and their feeling of a sense of belonging as well. I would have expected that both sponsors for an organization such as this—particularly at a college with over 25% Hispanic enrollment and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation—would both be of Hispanic heritage, but this was not the case. I found it extremely interesting that in all my interviews with the participants in this study that not one student made mention of the fact that one of the sponsors of the organization is Caucasian. This seems to be a nonissue for students.

Participants shared that their involvement with HALO had provided them with a sense of purpose, had given them an opportunity to explore their heritage and share that heritage with others on campus, had served as a means in which to socialize and meet others with similar backgrounds, had enabled them to identify scholarships and qualify for reduced-fee books and served as a means of participating in community outreach. Several students commented that they had made real and lasting friendships through their involvement with the organization, and that those friendships contributed to their overall happiness and sense of belonging.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) reported that early membership in social community organizations had a positive effect on students' sense of belonging, as do memberships in religious clubs, student government organizations and sports teams or clubs. *Interestingly, however, they did not find that students who held memberships in ethnic student organizations experienced a higher sense of belonging.* In this case, this study does not support the research. I found it interesting that this was the case. I fully expected to hear that the organization had little impact on participants' sense of belonging. In fact, the opposite holds true, given that participants cite HALO as being instrumental in their sense of belonging.

It could be argued that had I interviewed twice as many students my findings in this matter might have been vastly different. It could also be theorized, however, that administrators at the institution recognize the importance and impact that the HALO organization can/has have on their Latino/a student population, and have made a conscious decision to provide the resources and the right/dedicated personnel (i.e., HALO sponsors) needed to make it a successful and viable organization/program/service for their students.

In terms of involvement with other organizations on campus, three of the students reported that they were heavily involved with activities sponsored by Student Support Services (SSS), which is a federally funded program that students must qualify for; one was a non-active member of Phi Theta Kappa, a national honor society for students attending two-year institutions; one was active on the college drill team; one participant was in choir; and two were involved with youth organizations at their church (although another shared that she would have liked to join the Catholic organization on campus if time would have permitted).

According to Morris et al., (2003) studies showed that spiritual integration for those that report having a strong spiritual component to their lives is a significant predictor of persistence in college. The importance placed on religion, according to Hernandez and Lopez (2004) cannot be overstated. Witham (2003) even points out that the church environment provides students with a lot of educational opportunities.

In addition to the studies cited above, much of the literature I have read regarding Latino/as and academia mentioned religion as a strong pull for Latino/as. Given this fact, I was surprised that only two of the participants reported involvement with the church and only one spoke to how her involvement provided meaning and helped to deepen her faith. Again, had I interviewed twice as many students, however, my findings might have been different.

Research Question #6

Gender Role Expectations:

How do perceived gender role expectations impact Latina's decisions to persist in college?

Within the Latino community, children are raised to embrace family and to be loyal and respectful and as such, may be influenced by family status and dynamic in the decision regarding whether or not to enroll in college. Although some studies indicated that this family bond can enhance academic success (Fulgini & Pedersen, 2002; Sy, 2006; Sy & Romero, 2008), other studies indicated that the demands of academia may fall secondary to family responsibilities (Sy & Romeo, 2008). For those families that place demands associated with gender role expectations on its female members, attending college may place Latinas in the unenviable position of choosing one at the expense of the other. In fact, Kerr and Sodano (2003) maintained that role conflicts were the most commonly cited challenges that Latinas faced when pursuing a college degree.

In the Latino community, it is not unusual for women to have very specific gender roles and expectations—particularly in so-called traditional households. Of the seven Latinas interviewed for this study, four were born in Mexico and the other three were born in the U.S.; all but one is a first-generation college student (although one has an older sister who holds a college degree), and; two reported that they were raised in a traditional household.

When participants were asked whether their gender role expectations had any bearing whatsoever on their desire to enroll in college, all replied that it had not. The majority of participants felt that being assigned the role of caregiver, cook and housekeeper simply because they were born female is an archaic viewpoint and one that they do not hold. In spite of a

statement to that affect, Sonia seemed to accept her assigned role without question, although she commented that she did not think it was fair that she was expected to do more than her brothers...particularly because one of them was only employed part time. She explained that although she was raised in a traditional household and her parents believed in traditional roles for women, they were not so outdated in thought that they forbade her from attending school. Although she felt that her brother ought to support her educational endeavors by chipping in and helping with the housework when she needed to study, she knew that he would not. Although allowed to enroll in college, she was still expected to help her mother perform the duties of housekeeper and cook. Although she knew that the demands on her time would be great and that she might have to lose sleep in order to concentrate an adequate amount of time on her studies, after her initial trepidation about attending college subsided, she resolved to enroll and work toward her degree.

When asked whether their gender role expectations had influenced their abilities or desires to continue their studies, most participants again replied that they had not had a negative impact. For two participants, the opposite reportedly had been true. They both felt that because some family members or others in the Latino community still held firmly to the outdated notion of gender role expectations, it had actually motivated them to continue. They felt an obligation to prove that they could succeed in college because they felt they needed to realize their full potential. Further, they felt a responsibility to help pave the way for other Latinas—both for extended family members and women in general. With this view, although their gender role expectations did not have a significant role in their persistence, it did serve as motivation for them.

Most participants believed that their gender role expectations did not influence their

desire to enroll or persist with their studies, nor did they feel that the gender role expectations of family members had impacted their decision to enroll in college. On the other hand, several felt differently about their family's gender role expectations and the impact it had on their decision to *continue* with their studies.

Sonia in particular, had struggled with the challenge of juggling her studies with her assigned duties at home. She shared an incident she had had with her brother. After eating a meal that had been prepared for him, he instructed her to wash his dishes and mend a hole in one of his shirts. Apparently he had nothing going on at the time, and could see that Sonia was studying. When she explained to him that she was preparing for two tests, it had no impact. She then asked him why he didn't do his own dishes or mend his own clothes. He replied that if he were a woman, he probably would. I found it interesting to note that when Sonia was recounting this story there was a disconnect in her verbal response and her body language. She stated that she was angry with her brother, yet she was laughing throughout and shaking her head as if resigned to the situation. When asked whether or not she acquiesced and washed the dishes and mended his shirt, she laughed and avoided the question, so I didn't press the matter.

Sonia went on to explain that her brother had informed her that in his view, it made as much sense for him to do the dishes and mend his shirt as it did for him to ask her to change the tire on his truck. Further into the interview, Sonia shared that she really felt she had no right to complain, because her parents are understanding and lenient. She felt this way because they allowed her to postpone household chores until she finished studying. She was still expected to perform her duties, but because they allowed her to do them after finishing her studies (and not necessarily before) she felt that her parents supported her in her effort to obtain her college degree. She recounted this story without so much as a hint of irony. She did appear to be truly

grateful for their support.

Although several participants held that they did not believe in the outdated notion of traditional roles for women, I found it fascinating that more than one expressed concern whether they could keep up with household chores in addition to attending school or holding a job after marriage. Again, there seemed to be a disconnect when claiming on the one hand that they didn't hold to the view of gender role expectations, but on the other be resigned to its inevitability.

Rosalinda, who was also raised in a traditional household, commented that women have to do twice the work as a man because they have to clean, cook and care for children. Interestingly, she stated that, "...a guy...they're not the type to clean and do that type of duty like [women]. So I think woman's have to do like twice the work to achieve their goal." She further expressed indignation that she too is expected to fulfill this preconceived role for women. She commented:

They still expect me to clean up and do the woman's duties.... I think it's only fair for everybody to do their part and not just...well, just because you're a girl and have to do this or that. Like cleaning and stuff. ...I feel like it should change.

Although the gender role expectations from her family was not as stringent as expectations from Sonia's family, Rosalinda felt them nonetheless. In spite of the fact that both of these women to one degree or another felt that the gender role expectations from family were not fair, I listened with interest when they recounted their stories that seemed to show that they still accepted their assigned roles.

Mary and Beatriz, on the other hand, both shared that their parents wanted more for them than they had, and that they were raised to believe that men and women were equal. They both expressed gratitude that their parents raised them in such a manner, as they believed that it

inspired them and gave them confidence that they might not have had if raised in a traditional manner.

I too find the notion of gender role expectations to be archaic and ridiculous, and found these accounts to be a fascinating study. With Sonia and Rosalinda in particular, I was amazed at their acceptance of this assigned role. Although I was not raised in a traditional household per se, I did find myself falling into societal gender role expectations on some occasions. To this day I do find myself doing the majority of the cooking—but this is due to the fact that I enjoy it and not because I feel that I have to. In fact, when I come home from work and I'm tired and my husband walks in the door and asks me what's for dinner, it's pretty much a guarantee that a fight will ensue because I don't believe that I should *have* to cook dinner simply because I am a woman.

It is remarkable that three of these women—Mary and Beatriz included—are the children of parents raised in traditional households. They shared that their mothers grew up being made to do the cooking and the cleaning and they felt that it was unfair...so they chose to raise their children differently. I am fascinated by the fact that such an impact via a turn around in thought can be made in only one generation.

Recommendations for Practice

1. *Encourage administrators, faculty and staff to attend Freshman Orientation.* Students reported that they did not know the administrators on campus and expressed an interest in interacting with them on some level. Providing students with the opportunity to meet the leaders on campus, along with some of the faculty and support staff will make students feel welcomed, appreciated and engaged.

2. *Hold a New Student Orientation for students' families.* Oftentimes students who are the first in their family to attend college have difficulty explaining to parents the demands of academia. By educating family members regarding student expectations, the school and parents can form a partnership that serves to benefit students.
3. *Inspire faculty to build in-class activities that foster student participation.* Students respond better to learning that is both hands-on and interactive. In addition, the truly positive effects of diversity can only be accomplished through in-class engagement with diverse people who hold varying perspectives.
4. *Provide workshops that cover sensitivity training that is culturally relevant.* For students, perception is reality. Students feel discriminated against if they believe that others are favored over them because they know more about the subject matter; if they are embarrassed by being admonished in front of classmates for not knowing something that faculty feels they should have learned in high school; or if they are treated unfairly because of the color of their skin.
5. *Encourage faculty to learn the names of students.* Students maintained that the single most important element in their desire to persist with their studies was their interaction with faculty. Students reported feeling welcomed and valued when instructors smiled at them, learned their names and were encouraged to seek help if they were having difficulties.
6. *Educate faculty on the benefits derived from positive feedback.* Students reported that they benefitted greatly when they received positive feedback from their instructors. Positive feedback (in addition to grades) not only fostered increased academic confidence, but inspired students to increase their efforts as well.

7. *Continue to look for ways to engage students through college activities.* Individual perceptions of a welcoming environment on campus had an impact on students' commitment to the institution and subsequently their desire to graduate. The likelihood of students persisting with their studies increases when they are engaged in college activities.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. *Conduct a similar study with a greater number of participants.* This study used a population of seven Latina students. The findings might differ with a greater number of participants.
2. *Conduct a similar study at another institution that does not have an (HSI) designation.* This study used a population of students attending a two-year HSI in the Midwest. The findings might differ at another institution.
3. *Conduct a similar study at another community college with a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation with a greater number of Latina participants.* This study used a population of seven Latina students. The findings might differ with a greater number of students.
4. *Conduct a similar study with a greater number of Latinas raised in a traditional household in order to study the effects of gender role expectations.* This study included only two students raised in a traditional household. Findings might differ with a greater number of Latinas who were raised with traditional gender role expectations.
5. *Conduct a similar study with males.* This study used only female (Latina) students. The findings might differ with male students.

6. *Conduct a similar study at a four-year institution with a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation.* This study used a population of Latina students enrolled at a community college. The findings might differ with Latina students enrolled at a four-year institution.
7. *Conduct a study at a Predominately White Institution (PWI).* Latinas who attend PWIs would have an experience vastly different than those attending a college with large numbers who share their heritage.
8. *Conduct a study to identify those teaching methods that best meet the needs of a variety of students.* Students who enjoy the classroom experience are more engaged and have a greater chance of persisting with their studies.
9. *Study the effects of gender role expectations for women of differing races and from different cultures.* Although the percentage of traditional households may be higher in the Latino community, there are others who live with the challenges associated with gender role expectations.
10. *Conduct a similar study, but let the voice of participants define family and their subsequent roles.* With this study, questions were posed under the contextual framework of gender role expectations. Conduct a similar study regarding family and let participants frame the nature of the discussion concerning family.
11. *Conduct studies with Latinas' regarding their experiences outside the campus community.* It would be interesting to note how Latinas who are not attending college are affected by gender role expectations, if at all.
12. *Conduct a future research follow-up with participants in this study.* Ascertain whether participants' views and expectations changed over time.

Conclusions

Research results indicated that Great Plains Community College (GPCC) did a good job in fostering a sense of belonging for Latinas. Although the college had a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation along with a diverse student population, students failed to derive the benefits that could be gained through all-inclusive student interactions due to the voluntary separation prevalent on campus. Administrators, faculty and staff need to focus on ways in which to engage students and encourage interaction both inside and outside the classroom.

Latinas' cited a welcoming atmosphere on campus due to a friendly and helpful support staff and maintained that participation in student organizations, particularly the Hispanic American Latino Organization (HALO) on campus was one of the most important ways to be engaged outside the classroom.

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Appendix A - Research Request

Proposed Dissertation Research
For Great Plains Community College
Sue Laird
March 15, 2013

Dear Dr. _____:

My name is Sue Laird, and I am a doctoral candidate at the School of Education at Kansas State University. I am currently working on my dissertation and am endeavoring to find a Community College that has Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) status to conduct my research. A friend and colleague of mine, Sonia Esquivel, PhD, who is a Great Plains Community College Alumna, suggested that your institution would be ideal for my study. Based on preliminary research regarding your institution, I agree that GPCC would be an ideal setting for my research, and it is for this purpose that I am contacting you.

My Research: I am interested in identifying those factors that influence Latina's decisions to enroll and persist in college, as well as the challenges that they face while pursuing an undergraduate degree. Latinas are faced with educational challenges unique to their gender as well as their culture (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002), and understanding those challenges and finding ways to successfully support their postsecondary academic efforts will be helpful for student affairs professionals to know. I am specifically interested in studying the perceptions of Latinas' gender role expectations and the effect of familial and institutional support on their enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education.

My dissertation will be a qualitative case study with multiple participants research design, and I am hoping to interview five to twenty five students at your institution.

The benefit to GPCC: Understanding the unique needs faced by Latina's and applying that knowledge will be useful for planning and implementing programs and services to meet those needs. Learning how an institution may complement the support provided by family—or even substitute for it if absent is worthy of study and would aid in meeting the unique needs of Latinas enrolled at GPCC.

Theoretical Framework: I will be focusing on the work of Hurtado and Carter (1997) to guide my research. Their work will not only factor in the effect that campus climate has on persistence, but speaks more to the underrepresented student experience. I will also incorporate the use of social support theory in order to understand the importance that social support has on persistence.

The primary research question: What are the factors that contribute to enrollment sustainability and completion of a degree at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution for Latinas?

Sub Questions:

Ease of Transition

- 6. *What personal factors have changed or evolved since the transition from enrollment to persistence for Latinas?***

Campus Climate

- 7. *What personal factors influence Latina's perception of a welcoming environment on campus?***
- 8. *What institutional factors influence Latina's perception of a welcoming environment on campus?***

Gender role expectations:

- 4. *How do perceived gender role expectations impact Latina's decisions to persist in college?***

(Please know that these questions may evolve/be tweaked somewhat before actual interviews take place, depending on feedback received from my committee.)

I would be happy to provide you with any additional information and/or answer any questions you may have regarding my research, as well as meeting any requirements you may have.

I very much appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this request, and look forward to speaking to you at your earliest convenience.

Regards,

Appendix B - IRB Application 1

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: IRB Protocol # _____ Application Received: _____ Routed: _____ Training Complete: _____
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Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB)

Application for Approval Form
Last revised on January 2011

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

- **Title of Project:** (if applicable, use the exact title listed in the grant/contract application)

"How Latina's views of campus climate and gender role expectations contribute to persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving institution."

- **Type of Application:**

- New/Renewal Revision (to a pending new application)
 Modification (to an existing # _____ approved application)

- **Principal Investigator:** (must be a KSU faculty member)

Name:	Linda Thurston, PhD	Degree/Title:	Professor and Associate Dean
Department:	Department of Special Education, Counseling and Student Affairs	Campus Phone:	(785) 532-5765
Campus Address:	College of Education, Kansas State University 1100 Mid-Campus Drive Manhattan, KS 66506	Fax #:	(785) 532-7304
E-mail	lpt@ksu.edu		

- **Contact Name/Email/Phone for Questions/Problems with Form:** Susan E. Laird, Doctoral Candidate
selaird@icloud.com / 816.531.8597

- **Does this project involve any collaborators not part of the faculty/staff at KSU?** (projects with non-KSU collaborators may require additional coordination and approvals):

- No
 Yes

- **Project Classification** (Is this project part of one of the following?):

- Thesis
 Dissertation
 Faculty Research
 Other: _____

Note: Class Projects should use the short form application for class projects.

- **Please attach a copy of the Consent Form:**

- Copy attached
 Consent form not used

- **Funding Source:** Internal External (identify source and attach a copy of the sponsor's grant application or contract as submitted to the funding agency)

- Copy attached Not applicable

- Based upon criteria found in 45 CFR 46 – and the overview of projects that may qualify for exemption explained at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html>, I believe that my project using human subjects should be determined by the IRB to be exempt from IRB review:

Last revised on January 2011

- No
 Yes (If yes, please complete application including Section XII. C. 'Exempt Projects'; remember that only the IRB has the authority to determine that a project is exempt from IRB review)

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu

Human Subjects Research Protocol Application Form

The KSU IRB is required by law to ensure that all research involving human subjects is adequately reviewed for specific information and is approved prior to inception of any proposed activity. Consequently, it is important that you answer all questions accurately. If you need help or have questions about how to complete this application, please call the Research Compliance Office at 532-3224, or e-mail us at comply@ksu.edu.

Please provide the requested information in the shaded text boxes. The shaded text boxes are designed to accommodate responses within the body of the application. As you type your answers, the text boxes will expand as needed. After completion, print the form and send the original and one photocopy to the Institutional Review Board, Room 203, Fairchild Hall.

Principal Investigator: Linda Thurston, PhD
Project Title: "How Latina's views of campus climate and gender role expectations contribute to persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving institution."
Date: August 12, 2013.

MODIFICATION

Is this a modification of an approved protocol? Yes No If yes, please comply with the following:

If you are requesting a modification or a change to an IRB approved protocol, please provide a concise description of all of the changes that you are proposing in the following block. Additionally, please highlight or bold the proposed changes in the body of the protocol where appropriate, so that it is clearly discernable to the IRB reviewers what and where the proposed changes are. This will greatly help the committee and facilitate the review.

NON-TECHNICAL SYNOPSIS (brief narrative description of proposal easily understood by nonscientists):

The researcher hopes to ask participants questions about their perception of campus climate and how that environment, along with gender role expectations impact their decision to persist in college.

I. BACKGROUND (concise narrative review of the literature and basis for the study):

Latinos are the fastest growing population in the U.S. and represent the largest minority group at 15% of the total population (U.S. Census 2011); however, it is discouraging when compared to African American and Caucasians, Latinos, in general, still lag behind in postsecondary enrollment and degree completion (Lopez, 2009).

Latinas are faced with educational challenges unique to their gender as well as their culture (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Understanding those challenges and finding ways to successfully support Latina's postsecondary academic efforts, and subsequently address ways in which to narrow the educational gap, is the focus of my dissertation research. I am specifically interested in studying gender role expectations and the perception of campus climate and how they affect Latina's persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

Current research provides a basic understanding of these issues; however, very little focuses solely on Latinas in postsecondary settings. Parra (2007) studied Latinas in graduate education programs for her dissertation research at K-State and recommended further study of the effects that marianismo (which speaks to gender role expectations in traditional Latino households) has on persistence. In addition, several researchers call for further studies on campus climate (Hernandez & Lopez, 2005; Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2002; Milem et al., 2005) and its effects on persistence.

Women in general take on the role of caregiver of the family (Gilligan, 1982 & 1993), and in the Latino community, where there is a higher percentage of so-called "traditional" households, the woman as caregiver is entrenched in the culture (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008; Kanellos & Esteva-Fabregat, 1984; Mayo & Resnick, 1996). In the Latino culture, the idealized traditional feminine role calls for women to be submissive, chaste, and dependent, while the masculine role is defined by dominance, virility, and independence (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). In a

traditional household, the man generally holds to a stereotypical approach to gender roles; i.e., the man as breadwinner, and the woman contributing to the family unit by providing a paycheck if unmarried and if married, serving as wife and mother. When a woman fulfills her role, her responsibilities may hold little room for outside endeavors or "interests" such as obtaining a college degree. For those women who do pursue a college education, the support received from family—whether given freely in the absence of traditional gender role expectations or in spite of them—fosters persistence through the promotion of academic competence, self-sufficiency and relatedness (Rayle, et. al., 2005).

Latina's perceptions of familial expectations may be the first roadblock to obtaining a college degree...but another major obstacle many face is the environment they find on campus once enrolled. Hurtado & Carter's (1997) work on campus climate examines how students' transitional experiences and perception of the racial environment on campus influence their sense of belonging, which in turn, impacts persistence. Their work not only factors in the effect that campus climate has on persistence, but speaks more to the underrepresented student experience overall. Hurtado and Carter attempt to assess the effectiveness of student participation in a variety of academic and social activities as well as membership in various communities within the college environment in order to understand which activities and memberships contribute to feelings of 'fitting in' to college life. Those that feel a welcoming environment on campus, they argue, have a greater chance of persisting.

II. PROJECT/STUDY DESCRIPTION (please provide a concise narrative description of the proposed activity in terms that will allow the IRB or other interested parties to clearly understand what it is that you propose to do that involves human subjects. This description must be in enough detail so that IRB members can make an informed decision about proposal).

This study seeks to identify those factors related to gender role expectations and campus climate that affect Latina's persistence at GPCC. Data collection will be conducted through personal interviews on GPCC campus. Once IRB approval is obtained, the researcher will adhere to the following:

- Send an e-mail requesting participation (see attached) to GPCC administrators that will then be distributed to Latinas who have been attending GPCC for two or more semesters. In that letter, interested parties are asked to contact the researcher if they are interested in volunteering for the study.
- A group of 5-7 volunteers will be chosen for one or more group interviews for a pilot study in order for the researcher to identify any unclear or ambiguous items/terms in the questions to be posed.
- Researcher will meet with pilot study to reiterate the purpose of the study and reasoning for pilot study.
- Questions will be tweaked as needed and changes will be sent to IRB for approval.
- Once approval for question revisions from IRB is received, participants will be chosen and interviews will be scheduled. Interview questions will be sent prior to interviews.
- 5-6 volunteers will be chosen for in-depth interviews, which will take place on GPCC campus. Prior to conducting the interview the researcher will reiterate the purpose of the study and have participants sign consent forms. It is anticipated that 2-3 interviews lasting approximately 60—90 minutes will be required in order to cover the material.
- * Participants will be debriefed via phone conversations, e-mail and one-on-one interviews
- Tapes will be transcribed and coded.
- Findings will be reported.

III. OBJECTIVE (briefly state the objective of the research – what you hope to learn from the study):

I am specifically interested in studying gender role expectations and the perception of campus climate and how these factors affect Latina's persistence at Gret Plains Community College. Specifically, were participants faced with any gender role expectations that hindered college enrollment, and if so, what were they and how did they face or overcome them? Once enrolled at GPCC, how did they find the campus environment? What, in their opinion, contributes to a welcoming environment at GPCC and what needs to be improved? What factors (academic and social) contribute to persistence for these participants?

IV. DESIGN AND PROCEDURES (succinctly outline formal plan for study):

A. Location of study:	Great Plains Community College, located in the Midwest.
B. Variables to be studied:	The transcripts will be subject to qualitative analysis and therefore no specific variables will be studied unless they emerge from the analysis
C. Data collection methods: (surveys, instruments, etc – PLEASE ATTACH)	All data will be collected through personal interviews (Questions attached).
D. List any factors that might lead to a subject dropping out or withdrawing from a study. These might include, but are not limited to emotional or physical stress, pain, inconvenience, etc.:	Subjects may drop out due to any one (or more) of the following: 1. Time constraints / Inconvenient interview times 2. Lack of interest / Change of mind 3. Too busy with studies 4. Discomfort with subject matter 5. Discomfort with interviewer
E. List all biological samples taken: (if any)	N/A
F. Debriefing procedures for participants:	The researcher will send copies of transcripts to all participants and invite them to make any changes and/or elaborate on any answers provided that they deem necessary. In addition, the researcher will make herself available in person, via e-mail or phone for follow-up interviews and/or to answer any questions that participants may have about the study or subsequent findings. Participants will be sent a copy of final product and invited to dissertation defense.

V. RESEARCH SUBJECTS:

A. Source:	Latinas enrolled in good standing at GPCC.
B. Number:	5-7 for group interview/pilot study & 5-6 for individual in-depth interviews, so 10-13 total
C. Characteristics: (list any unique qualifiers desirable for research subject participation)	Women Hispanic ethnicity (Latinas) Students in good standing enrolled for 2 or more semesters at GCCC.
D. Recruitment procedures: (Explain how do you plan to recruit your subjects? Attach any fliers, posters, etc. used in recruitment. If you plan to use any inducements, ie. cash, gifts, prizes, etc., please list them here.)	Administrators at GPCC are identifying students enrolled and will forward an e-mail asking for volunteers to participate in the study. The researcher has made a visit to GPCC and met with students in the HALO group and discussed the research and upcoming study. At that meeting, the researcher provided pizza, soda pop and cookies for students. The researcher plans to provide \$10-\$15 gift certificates for the GPCC bookstore for those that participate in the study, as well as provide cookies and soda pop at the time of the interviews.

VI. RISK – PROTECTION – BENEFITS: The answers for the three questions below are central to human subjects research. You must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to research participants, protection strategies, and anticipated benefits to participants or others.

A. Risks for Subjects: (Identify any reasonably foreseeable physical, psychological, or social risks for participants. State that there are "no known risks" if appropriate.)	No known risks
---	----------------

- B. **Minimizing Risk:** (Describe specific measures used to minimize or protect subjects from anticipated risks.)

N/A

- C. **Benefits:** (Describe any reasonably expected benefits for research participants, a class of participants, or to society as a whole.)

Possible benefits for research participants include:

- * Feeling of satisfaction associated with knowing that they are helping administrators, faculty & staff at GPCC learn more about some of the challenges they have faced prior to enrolling and in their efforts to persist in college, which could result in strengthening programs and services offered at GPCC.

- * Feeling of satisfaction associated with knowing that they could quite possibly be helping to pave the way for other Latinas that follow in their footsteps at GPCC.

- * Being proud in the knowledge that they are adding to the body of knowledge about some of the challenges that Latinas face (in terms of gender role expectations) prior to and during the pursuit of a college degree as well as their unique views of the campus climate of GPCC, a 2-year Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

- * Possible gratitude or relief that their views are being viewed as unique, valuable, and important.

- * Empowered by being given a voice to discuss these important matters.

Possible benefits to GPCC and society as a whole:

- * Research findings will add to the growing body of research regarding some of the challenges that Latinas face (in terms of gender role expectations) prior to and during the pursuit of a college degree as well as the perception of campus climate. It should be noted that the body of research is limited in terms of Latinas enrolled at 2-year institutions, and even more so at 2-year HSI institutions.

- * The research proposed here regarding gender role expectations builds upon some of the work (and subsequent recommendation of Marcela Parra, 2007,) a K-State doctoral student, which could benefit K-State students in particular as well as society in general.

- * The findings from this proposed study could help GPCC faculty, staff, and administrators better understand the challenges faced by this student population and highlight areas of concern as well as areas of success.

In your opinion, does the research involve **more than minimal risk** to subjects? ("Minimal risk" means that "the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

Yes

No

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that an individual has disclosed to you in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Consequently, it is your responsibility to protect information that you gather from human research subjects in a way that is consistent with your agreement with the volunteer and with their expectations. If possible, it is best if research subjects' identity and linkage to information or data remains unknown.

Explain how you are going to protect confidentiality of research subjects and/or data or records. Include plans for maintaining records after completion.

The identities of participants will be held confidential by implementing procedures including the following:

- * students will be assigned pseudonyms
- * consent forms will be stored separately from interview data
- * taped recordings and computer disks will be stored in locked file cabinets
- * files will only be accessible to the principal investigator and the student investigator
- * data files will not be submitted via e-mail transmission
- * data will be coded and data information gleaned from that will be stored in a separate file cabinet from the consent forms and interview data

VIII. INFORMED CONSENT: Informed consent is a critical component of human subjects research – it is your responsibility to make sure that any potential subject knows exactly what the project that you are planning is about, and what his/her potential role is. (There may be projects where some forms of “deception” of the subject is necessary for the execution of the study, but it must be carefully justified to and approved by the IRB). A schematic for determining when a waiver or alteration of informed consent may be considered by the IRB is found at

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/consentckls.html>

Even if your proposed activity does qualify for a waiver of informed consent, you must still provide potential participants with basic information that informs them of their rights as subjects, i.e. explanation that the project is research and the purpose of the research, length of study, study procedures, debriefing issues to include anticipated benefits, study and administrative contact information, confidentiality strategy, and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty, etc. Even if your potential subjects are completely anonymous, you are obliged to provide them (and the IRB) with basic information about your project. See informed consent example on the URCO website. It is a federal requirement to maintain informed consent forms for 3 years after the study completion.

Yes No Answer the following questions about the informed consent procedures.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A. Are you using a written informed consent form? If “yes,” include a copy with this application. If “no” see b. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | B. In accordance with guidance in 45 CFR 46, I am requesting a waiver or alteration of informed consent elements (See Section VII above). If “yes,” provide a basis and/or justification for your request. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | C. Are you using the online Consent Form Template provided by the URCO? If “no,” does your Informed Consent document has all the minimum required elements of informed consent found in the Consent Form Template? (Please explain) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | D. Are your research subjects anonymous? If they are anonymous, you will not have access to any information that will allow you to determine the identity of the research subjects in your study, or to link research data to a specific individual in any way. Anonymity is a powerful protection for potential research subjects. (An anonymous subject is one whose identity is unknown even to the researcher, or the data or information collected cannot be linked in any way to a specific person). |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | E. Are subjects debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research? Debriefing refers to a mechanism for informing the research subjects of the results or conclusions, after the data is collected and analyzed, and the study is over. (If “no” explain why.) Attach copy of debriefing statement to be utilized. |

***It is a requirement that you maintain all signed copies of informed consent documents for at least 3 years following the completion of your study. These documents must be available for examination and review by federal compliance officials.**

IX. PROJECT INFORMATION: (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes | No | Does the project involve any of the following? |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Deception of subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Shock or other forms of punishment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Sexually explicit materials or questions about sexual orientation, sexual experience or sexual abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Handling of money or other valuable commodities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. Extraction or use of blood, other bodily fluids, or tissues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f. Questions about any kind of illegal or illicit activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g. Purposeful creation of anxiety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h. Any procedure that might be viewed as invasion of privacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. Physical exercise or stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | j. Administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | k. Any procedure that might place subjects at risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | l. Any form of potential abuse; i.e., psychological, physical, sexual |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | m. Is there potential for the data from this project to be published in a journal, presented at a conference, etc? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | n. Use of surveys or questionnaires for data collection |

IF YES, PLEASE ATTACH!!

- X. **SUBJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes | No | Does the research involve subjects from any of the following categories? |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Under 18 years of age (these subjects require parental or guardian consent) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Over 65 years of age |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Physically or mentally disabled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Economically or educationally disadvantaged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. Unable to provide their own legal informed consent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f. Pregnant females as target population |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g. Victims |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h. Subjects in institutions (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. Are research subjects in this activity students recruited from university classes or volunteer pools? If so, do you have a reasonable alternative(s) to participation as a research subject in your project, i.e., another activity such as writing or reading that would serve to protect students from unfair pressure or coercion to participate in this project? If you answered this question "Yes," explain any <u>alternatives options</u> for class credit for potential human subject volunteers in your study. (It is also important to remember that: Students must be free to choose not to participate in research that they have signed up for at any time without penalty. Communication of their decision can be conveyed in any manner, to include simply not showing up for the research.) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | j. Are research subjects audio taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?
<div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Taped recordings and computer disks will be stored in locked file cabinets, and files will only be accessible to the principal investigator and the student investigator * Data files will not be submitted via e-mail transmission * Data will be coded and data information gleaned from that will be stored in a separate file cabinet from the consent forms and interview data </div> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | k. Are research subjects' images being recorded (video taped, photographed)? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?
<div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> </div> |

XI. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** Concerns have been growing that financial interests in research may threaten the safety and rights of human research subjects. Financial interests are not in them selves prohibited and may well be appropriate and legitimate. Not all financial interests cause Conflict of Interest (COI) or harm to human subjects. However, to the extent that financial interests may affect the welfare of human subjects in research, IRB's, institutions, and investigators must consider what actions regarding financial interests may be necessary to protect human subjects. Please answer the following questions:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> | <p>a. Do you or the institution have any proprietary interest in a potential product of this research, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, or licensing agreements?</p> <p>b. Do you have an equity interest in the research sponsor (publicly held or a non-publicly held company)?</p> <p>c. Do you receive significant payments of other sorts, eg., grants, equipment, retainers for consultation and/or honoraria from the sponsor of this research?</p> <p>d. Do you receive payment per participant or incentive payments?</p> <p>e. If you answered yes on any of the above questions, please provide adequate explanatory information so the IRB can assess any potential COI indicated above.</p> |
|--|---|--|

XII. PROJECT COLLABORATORS:

A. **KSU Collaborators – list anyone affiliated with KSU who is collecting or analyzing data:** (list all collaborators on the project, including co-principal investigators, undergraduate and graduate students)

Name:	Department:	Campus Phone:	Campus Email:
Bernard Frnklin, PhD	Sp Assis - VP Student Life	785.532.6237	bernardf@k-state.edu
Christy Moran Craft, PhD	Spec Ed Counseling & Student Aff	785.532.5940	ccraft@k-state.edu
Doris Wright Carroll, PhD	Spec Ed Counseling & Student Aff	785.532.5941	dcarroll@k-state.edu
Lori Navarrete, PhD	N/A	702.992.2519	lori.navarrete@nsc.edu

B. **Non-KSU Collaborators:** (List all collaborators on your human subjects research project not affiliated with KSU in the spaces below. KSU has negotiated an Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the federal office responsible for oversight of research involving human subjects. When research involving human subjects includes collaborators who are not employees or agents of KSU the activities of those unaffiliated individuals may be covered under the KSU Assurance only in accordance with a formal, written agreement of commitment to relevant human subject protection policies and IRB oversight. The Unaffiliated Investigators Agreement can be found and downloaded at <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/Unaffiliated%20Investigator%20Agreement.doc>

C. The URCO must have a copy of the Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement on file for each non-KSU collaborator who is not covered by their own IRB and assurance with OHRP. Consequently, it is critical that you identify non-KSU collaborators, and initiate any coordination and/or approval process early, to minimize delays caused by administrative requirements.)

Name:	Organization:	Phone:	Institutional Email:
N/A			

Does your non-KSU collaborator's organization have an Assurance with OHRP? (for Federalwide Assurance and Multiple Project Assurance (MPA) listings of other institutions, please reference the OHRP website under Assurance Information at: <http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search>).

No
 Yes If yes, Collaborator's FWA or MPA # _____

Is your non-KSU collaborator's IRB reviewing this proposal?

No
 Yes If yes, IRB approval # _____

C. **Exempt Projects:** 45 CFR 46 identifies six categories of research involving human subjects that may be exempt from IRB review. The categories for exemption are listed here: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html>. If you believe that your project qualifies for exemption, please indicate which exemption category applies (1-6). Please remember that only the IRB can make the final determination whether a project is exempt from IRB review, or not.

Exemption Category: _____

XIII. CLINICAL TRIAL Yes No
 (If so, please give product.) _____

Export Controls Training:

-The Provost has mandated that all KSU faculty/staff with a full-time appointment participate in the Export Control Program.

-If you are not in our database as having completed the Export Control training, this proposal will not be approved until your participation is verified.

-To complete the Export Control training, follow the instructions below:

Click on:

<http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/ecp/index.htm>

1. After signing into K-State Online, you will be taken to the Export Control Homepage
2. Read the directions and click on the video link to begin the program
3. Make sure you enter your name / email when prompted so that participation is verified

If you click on the link and are not taken to K-State Online, this means that you have already completed the Export Control training and have been removed from the roster. If this is the case, no further action is required.

-Can't recall if you have completed this training? Contact the URCO at 785-532-3224 or comply@ksu.edu and we will be happy to look it up for you.

Post Approval Monitoring: The URCO has a Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) program to help assure that activities are performed in accordance with provisions or procedures approved by the IRB. Accordingly, the URCO staff will arrange a

PAM visit as appropriate; to assess compliance with approved activities.

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu

INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

(Print this page separately because it requires a signature by the PI.)

P.I. Name: Linda Thurston, PhD, Major Professor

Title of Project: "How Latina's views of campus climate and gender role expectations contribute to persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving institution."

XIV. **ASSURANCES:** As the Principal Investigator on this protocol, I provide assurances for the following:

- A. **Research Involving Human Subjects:** This project will be performed in the manner described in this proposal, and in accordance with the Federalwide Assurance FWA00000865 approved for Kansas State University available at <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm#FWA>, applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. Any proposed deviation or modification from the procedures detailed herein must be submitted to the IRB, and be approved by the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) prior to implementation.
- B. **Training:** I assure that all personnel working with human subjects described in this protocol are technically competent for the role described for them, and have completed the required IRB training modules found on the URCO website at: <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/training/index.htm>. I understand that no proposals will receive final IRB approval until the URCO has documentation of completion of training by all appropriate personnel.
- C. **Extramural Funding:** If funded by an extramural source, I assure that this application accurately reflects all procedures involving human subjects as described in the grant/contract proposal to the funding agency. I also assure that I will notify the IRB/URCO, the KSU PreAward Services, and the funding/contract entity if there are modifications or changes made to the protocol after the initial submission to the funding agency.
- D. **Study Duration:** I understand that it is the responsibility of the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) to perform continuing reviews of human subjects research as necessary. I also understand that as continuing reviews are conducted, it is my responsibility to provide timely and accurate review or update information when requested, to include notification of the IRB/URCO when my study is changed or completed.
- E. **Conflict of Interest:** I assure that I have accurately described (in this application) any potential Conflict of Interest that my collaborators, the University, or I may have in association with this proposed research activity.
- F. **Adverse Event Reporting:** I assure that I will promptly report to the IRB / URCO any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others that involve the protocol as approved. Unanticipated or Adverse Event Form is located on the URCO website at: <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/index.htm>. In the case of a serious event, the Unanticipated or Adverse Events Form may follow a phone call or email contact with the URCO.
- G. **Accuracy:** I assure that the information herein provided to the Committee for Human Subjects Research is to the best of my knowledge complete and accurate.

(Principal Investigator Signature)

(date)

Appendix C - Questions for Group to Consider for Individual Interviews

The main/guiding question: *How do perceived gender role expectations and sense of belonging contribute to enrollment sustainability at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution for Latinas?*

1. *Please provide some background information about yourself.*
 - *What term(s) do you use to describe yourself in terms of your heritage? (e.g., Latina, Hispanic, etc.)*
 - *What is the preferred term(s) you would like others to use to describe you?*
 - *What is your family's country of origin?*
 - *How many generations of your family have lived in this country?*
 - *How did this (first, second, etc.) generational factor affect your decision enroll in college?*
 - *How has this (first, second, etc.) generational factor affect your decision to persist in college?*
 - *How many generations of your family have graduated from college? (*
 - *How does this influence your decision to stay in college?*

2. *How does the perception of campus climate contribute to Latina's decision to persist in college?*

Questions pertaining to Academic Environment

- *How would you describe classroom interactions among students in your classes? Please identify the class(es) to which you refer.*
- *Have you experienced and/or observed any instances that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair during any of your classes? If so, please explain and identify the class(es).*
- *Are there others of similar heritage as you in any of your classes, and if so, how do you feel about that?*
- *How does the curriculum (your studies) contribute to a welcoming campus environment?*

Questions pertaining to Faculty Interactions

- *How would you characterize or describe the faculty/student interactions that occur during your classes?*
- *Would you please describe your one-on-one interactions with professors/instructors outside of class?*
- *What makes some professors/instructors more approachable than others?*
- *What courses (or professors/instructors) encourage you to participate in classroom discussions?*
- *Do you feel respected by your peers/professors? If so, please provide examples. If*

- not, please explain why.*
- *Have you experienced and/or observed any instances involving any of your professors/instructors that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair? If so, please provide examples.*
 - *Is there anything else that you would like to add about the faculty and how they make you feel?*
 - *How important are interactions with faculty to your decision to persist in college?*
 - *Have you felt respected by administrators? If so, please provide examples.*
 - *Have you experienced and/or observed any situations involving any administrators that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair? If so, please provide examples.*
 - *Is there anything else that you would like to add about administrators and how they make you feel?*
 - *How important are interactions with administrators to your decision to persist in college?*
 - *Have you felt respected by support staff? If so, please provide examples.*
 - *Have you experienced and/or observed any situations involving any support staff that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair? If so, please provide examples.*
 - *Is there anything else that you would like to add about support staff and how they make you feel?*
 - *How important are interactions with support staff to your decision to persist in college?*

Questions pertaining to Outside the Classroom

- *How would you describe the environment you live in?*
- *What factors influenced your decision to live there?*
- *How do you feel about off-campus housing?*
- *How do you feel about on-campus housing?*
- *Please describe any situation that you saw as prejudicial, discriminatory, or unfair related to your ethnicity and/or gender in your living environment.*
- *Is there a particular group of people either on campus or off campus with whom you feel most comfortable? Why or why not?*
- *What organizations are you involved in? How often do they meet? Do you always attend meetings? Do you participate?*
- *Are you involved in any programs or services at this institution that contribute to your persistence? If so, how do they contribute to your desire to persist?*
- *How often do you go home? How do you feel when you are home?*
- *How often do you go out with your friends? How do you feel when you are with your friends?*

Questions pertaining to Commitment

- *How do you feel about your decision to attend this college?*
- *Was there ever a time when you wanted to stop out or quit college?*
- *Do you have any friends enrolled in this college who thought about leaving? Why did they stay or leave?*
- *What motivated you to enroll at this college?*

- *Were you recruited to attend school here? Have you felt valued at this college? Please provide examples.*
- *How did your family feel about you coming to this college?*
- *How did your significant other (if applicable) feel about you coming to this college?*
- *How do you feel about your decision to attend this college?*
- *What motivated you to stay enrolled at this college?*
- *How committed are you to staying here?*

Questions pertaining to Graduating

- *How do you feel about graduating from this college?*
- *Did you have any fears about enrolling in and/or attending this college? If so, what were they?*
- *Have you had any concerns while attending this college? If so, what were they?*
- *How does your family feel about you graduating?*
- *How does your significant other (if applicable) feel about you graduating?*
- *How do you explain to your parents your degree/career?*
- *How do you explain to your significant other (if applicable) your degree/career?*
- *How would you describe the academic advising you have received at this college?*

Questions pertaining to Sense of Belonging

- *Did any faculty, staff or administrators encourage or discourage you from attending college in high school?*
 - *Did you feel welcomed when you first arrived on campus? What things made you feel welcomed or unwelcomed?*
 - *How welcomed or unwelcomed do you feel now compared to when you first arrived on campus?*
 - *How would you describe your interactions with various student services on campus?*
 - *How would you describe your level of comfort at this college?*
 - *Do you feel a sense of belonging or connection to this college? Who or what has made you feel that you belong (are connected to) or do not belong (are not connected to) this college?*
 - *Please describe any other things (questions/experiences/perceptions) that you haven't had the opportunity to talk about during this interview, but which you find important regarding the topic of campus climate and diversity issues here at this college.*
3. *How do perceived gender role expectations (duties traditionally performed by women) impact Latina's decision to persist in college?*
- *How do your gender role expectations impact the decision to persist in college?*
 - *How do your family's gender role expectations impact the decision to persist in college?*
 - *How does your husband/significant other's (if applicable) gender role expectations impact the decision to persist in college?*

Appendix D - Email Requesting Student Participation

February 21, 2014

Dear Student:

I am a doctoral student at Kansas State University interested in studying the personal experiences of Hispanic women and the factors that contribute to their sustained enrollment in college. I would like to request your help and participation in a research study that will explore the lived experiences and personal recollections unique from your perspective regarding academic and social experiences, sense of belonging or connectedness to the college, and positive influences that may have motivated you to continue with your studies.

The primary method for data collection will be face-to-face interviews. This allows the researcher to capture the unique experiences of participants in their own words, which helps to clarify meaning and gain a greater understanding. It is anticipated that two individual, in-depth interviews will be held and will take approximately 60—90 minutes each. The interview questions will be made available to those participating prior to the date of the interview.

There are no known risks to either the participants or the researcher. The identities of participants will be held confidential by implementing procedures including the following: a) students will be assigned pseudonyms; b) consent forms will be stored separately from interview data; c) taped recordings and computer disks will be stored in locked file cabinets; d) files will only be accessible to the principal investigator (my major professor) and the student investigator (myself); e) data will be coded and data information gleaned from that will be stored in a separate file cabinet from the consent forms and interview data.

Your distinctive points of view as students at Garden City Community College will help to further develop an understanding of how and what Hispanic females experience as students and what motivates them to persist in college. If you are interested in participating in this study, please send an e-mail to me at selaird@icloud.com. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me directly at (H) 816.531.8597 or (Cell) 816.797.2519.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and your willingness to make a difference to those who follow in your footsteps.

Sincerely,

Sue Laird
Doctoral Candidate
College of Education
Kansas State University

Appendix E - IRB Application 2

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: IRB Protocol # _____ Application Received: _____
Routed: _____ Training Complete: _____

Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) Application for Approval Form Last revised on January 2011

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

- **Title of Project:** (if applicable, use the exact title listed in the grant/contract application)

“How Latina’s views of campus climate and gender role expectations contribute to persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving institution.”

- **Type of Application:**
 New/Renewal Revision (to a pending new application)
 Modification (to an existing # _____ approved application)

- **Principal Investigator:** (must be a KSU faculty member)

Name:	Linda Thurston, PhD	Degree/Title:	Professor and Associate Dean
Department:	Department of Special Education, Counseling and Student Affairs	Campus Phone:	(785) 532-5765
Campus Address:	College of Education, Kansas State University 1100 Mid-Campus Drive Manhattan, KS 66506	Fax #:	(785) 532-7304
E-mail	lpt@ksu.edu		

- **Contact Name/Email/Phone for Questions/Problems with Form:**

Susan E. Laird, Doctoral Candidate
 selaird@icloud.com / 816.531.8597

- **Does this project involve any collaborators not part of the faculty/staff at KSU?** (projects with non-KSU collaborators may require additional coordination and approvals):
 No
 Yes

- **Project Classification** (Is this project part of one of the following?):
 Thesis
 Dissertation
 Faculty Research
 Other: _____
 Note: Class Projects should use the short form application for class projects.

- **Please attach a copy of the Consent Form:**
 Copy attached
 Consent form not used

- **Funding Source:** Internal External (identify source and attach a copy of the sponsor’s grant application or contract as submitted to the funding agency)
 Copy attached Not applicable

- **Based upon criteria found in 45 CFR 46 – and the overview of projects that may qualify for exemption explained at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html> , I believe that my project using human subjects should be determined by the IRB to be exempt from IRB review:**

Last revised on January 2011

- No
 Yes (If yes, please complete application including Section XII. C. 'Exempt Projects'; remember that only the IRB has the authority to determine that a project is exempt from IRB review)

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu

Human Subjects Research Protocol Application Form

The KSU IRB is required by law to ensure that all research involving human subjects is adequately reviewed for specific information and is approved prior to inception of any proposed activity. Consequently, it is important that you answer all questions accurately. If you need help or have questions about how to complete this application, please call the Research Compliance Office at 532-3224, or e-mail us at comply@ksu.edu.

Please provide the requested information in the shaded text boxes. The shaded text boxes are designed to accommodate responses within the body of the application. As you type your answers, the text boxes will expand as needed. After completion, print the form and send the original and one photocopy to the Institutional Review Board, Room 203, Fairchild Hall.

Principal Investigator:	Linda Thurston, PhD
Project Title:	“How Latina’s views of campus climate and gender role expectations contribute to persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving institution.”
Date:	February 10, 2014

MODIFICATION

Is this a modification of an approved protocol? Yes No If yes, please comply with the following:

If you are requesting a modification or a change to an IRB approved protocol, please provide a concise description of all of the changes that you are proposing in the following block. Additionally, please highlight or bold the proposed changes in the body of the protocol where appropriate, so that it is clearly discernable to the IRB reviewers what and where the proposed changes are. This will greatly help the committee and facilitate the review.

NON-TECHNICAL SYNOPSIS (brief narrative description of proposal easily understood by nonscientists):

The researcher hopes to ask participants questions about their perception of campus climate and how that environment, along with gender role expectations impact their decision to persist in college.

I. BACKGROUND (concise narrative review of the literature and basis for the study):

Latinos are the fastest growing population in the U.S. and represent the largest minority group at 15% of the total population (U.S. Census 2011); however, it is discouraging when compared to African American and Caucasians, Latinos, in general, still lag behind in postsecondary enrollment and degree completion (Lopez, 2009).

Latinas are faced with educational challenges unique to their gender as well as their culture (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Understanding those challenges and finding ways to successfully support Latina's postsecondary academic efforts, and subsequently address ways in which to narrow the educational gap, is the focus of my dissertation research. I am specifically interested in studying gender role expectations and the perception of campus climate and how they affect Latina's persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

Current research provides a basic understanding of these issues; however, very little focuses solely on Latinas in postsecondary settings. Parra (2007) studied Latinas in graduate education programs for her dissertation research at K-State and recommended further study of the effects that *marianismo* (which speaks to gender role expectations in traditional Latino households) has on persistence. In addition, several researchers call for further studies on campus climate (Hernandez & Lopez, 2005; Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2002; Milem et al., 2005) and its effects on persistence.

Women in general take on the role of caregiver of the family (Gilligan, 1982 & 1993), and in the Latino community, where there is a higher percentage of so-called "traditional" households, the woman as caregiver is entrenched in the culture (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008; Kanellos & Esteva-Fabregat, 1984; Mayo & Resnick, 1996). In the Latino culture, the idealized traditional feminine role calls for women to be submissive, chaste, and dependent, while the masculine role is defined by dominance, virility, and independence (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). In a traditional household, the man generally holds to a stereotypical approach to gender roles; i.e., the man as breadwinner, and the woman contributing to the family unit by providing a paycheck if unmarried and if married, serving as wife and mother. When a woman fulfills her role, her responsibilities may hold little room for outside endeavors or "interests" such as obtaining a college degree. For those women who do pursue a college education, the support received from family—whether given freely in the absence of traditional gender role expectations or in spite of them—fosters persistence through the promotion of academic competence, self-sufficiency and relatedness (Rayle, et. al., 2005).

Latina's perceptions of familial expectations may be the first roadblock to obtaining a college degree...but another major obstacle many face is the environment they find on campus once enrolled. Hurtado & Carter's (1997) work on campus climate examines how students' transitional experiences and perception of the racial environment on campus influence their sense of belonging, which in turn, impacts persistence. Their work not only factors in the effect that campus climate has on persistence, but speaks more to the underrepresented student experience overall. Hurtado and Carter attempt to assess the effectiveness of student participation in a variety of academic and social activities as well as membership in various communities within the college environment in order to understand which activities and memberships contribute to feelings of 'fitting in' to college life. Those that feel a welcoming environment on campus, they argue, have a greater chance of persisting.

- II. **PROJECT/STUDY DESCRIPTION** (please provide a concise narrative description of the proposed activity in terms that will allow the IRB or other interested parties to clearly understand what it is that you propose to do that involves human subjects. This description must be in enough detail so that IRB members can make an informed decision about proposal).

This study seeks to identify those factors related to gender role expectations and campus climate that affect Latina's persistence at GPCC. Data collection will be conducted through personal interviews on GPCC campus. Once IRB approval is obtained, the researcher will adhere to the following:

- Send an e-mail requesting participation (see attached) to GPCC administrators that will then be distributed to Latinas who have been attending GPCC for two or more semesters. In that letter, interested parties are asked to contact the researcher if they are interested in volunteering for the study.
- A group of 5-7 volunteers will be chosen for one or more group interviews for a pilot study in order for the researcher to identify any unclear or ambiguous items/terms in the questions to be posed.
- Researcher will meet with pilot study/focus group to reiterate the purpose of the study and reasoning for pilot study.
- Questions will be tweaked as needed and changes will be sent to IRB for approval.
- Once approval for question revisions from IRB is received, participants will be chosen and interviews will be scheduled. Interview questions will be sent prior to interviews.
- 5-6 volunteers will be chosen for in-depth interviews, which will take place on GPCC campus. Prior to conducting the interview the researcher will reiterate the purpose of the study and have participants sign consent forms. It is anticipated that 2-3 interviews lasting approximately 60—90 minutes will be required in order to cover the material.
- * Participants will be debriefed via phone conversations, e-mail and one-on-one interviews
- Tapes will be transcribed and coded.
- Findings will be reported.

III. **OBJECTIVE** (briefly state the objective of the research – what you hope to learn from the study):

I am specifically interested in studying gender role expectations and the perception of campus climate and how these factors affect Latina's persistence at Great Plains Community College. Specifically, were participants faced with any gender role expectations that hindered college enrollment, and if so, what were they and how did they face or overcome them? Once enrolled at GPCC, how did they find the campus environment? What, in their opinion, contributes to a welcoming environment at GPCC and what needs to be improved? What factors (academic and social) contribute to persistence for these participants?

IV. **DESIGN AND PROCEDURES** (succinctly outline formal plan for study):

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. Location of study: | Great Plains Community College, located in the Midwest |
| B. Variables to be studied: | The transcripts will be subject to qualitative analysis and therefore no specific variables will be studied unless they emerge from the analysis |
| C. Data collection methods: (surveys, instruments, etc – PLEASE ATTACH) | All data will be collected through personal interviews (Questions attached) |
| D. List any factors that might lead to a subject dropping out or withdrawing from a study. These might include, but are not limited to emotional or physical stress, pain, inconvenience, etc.: | <p>Subjects may drop out due to any one (or more) of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time constraints / Inconvenient interview times 2. Lack of interest / Change of mind 3. Too busy with studies 4. Discomfort with subject matter 5. Discomfort with interviewer |
| E. List all biological samples taken: (if any) | N/A |

F. Debriefing procedures for participants: **The researcher will send copies of transcripts to all participants and invite them to make any changes and/or elaborate on any answers provided that they deem necessary. In addition, the researcher will make herself available in person, via e-mail or phone for follow-up interviews and/or to answer any questions that participants may have about the study or subsequent findings. Participants will be sent a copy of final product and invited to dissertation defense.**

V. **RESEARCH SUBJECTS:**

A. Source:	Latinas enrolled in good standing at GPCC
B. Number:	5-7 for group interview/pilot study & 5-6 for individual in-depth interviews, so 10-13 total
C. Characteristics: (list any unique qualifiers desirable for research subject participation)	Women Hispanic ethnicity (Latinas) Students in good standing enrolled for 2 or more semesters at GPCC
D. Recruitment procedures: (Explain how do you plan to recruit your subjects? Attach any fliers, posters, etc. used in recruitment. If you plan to use any inducements, ie. cash, gifts, prizes, etc., please list them here.)	Administrators at GPCC are identifying students enrolled and will forward an e-mail asking for volunteers to participate in the study. The researcher has made a visit to GPCC and met with students in the HALO group and discussed the research and upcoming study. At that meeting, the researcher provided pizza , soda pop and cookies for students. The researcher plans to provide \$10-\$15 gift certificates for the GPCC bookstore for those that participate in the study, as well as provide cookies and soda pop at the time of the interviews.

VI. **RISK – PROTECTION – BENEFITS:** The answers for the three questions below are central to human subjects research. You must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to research participants, protection strategies, and anticipated benefits to participants or others.

- A. **Risks for Subjects:** (Identify any reasonably foreseeable physical, psychological, or social risks for participants. State that there are “no known risks” if appropriate.)
No known risks
- B. **Minimizing Risk:** (Describe specific measures used to minimize or protect subjects from anticipated risks.)
N/A
- C. **Benefits:** (Describe any reasonably expected benefits for research participants, a class of participants, or to society as a whole.)

Possible benefits for research participants include:

* Feeling of satisfaction associated with knowing that they are helping administrators, faculty & staff at GPCC learn more about some of the challenges they have faced prior to enrolling and in their efforts to persist in college, which could result in strengthening programs and services offered at GPCC.

* Feeling of satisfaction associated with knowing that they could quite possibly be helping to pave the way for other Latinas that follow in their footsteps at GPCC.

* Being proud in the knowledge that they are adding to the body of knowledge about some of the challenges that Latinas face (in terms of gender role expectations) prior to and during the pursuit of a college degree as well as their unique views of the campus climate of GPCC, a 2-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

* Possible gratitude or relief that their views are being viewed as unique, valuable, and important.

* Empowered by being given a voice to discuss these important matters.

Possible benefits to GPCC and society as a whole:

* Research findings will add to the growing body of research regarding some of the challenges that Latinas face (in terms of gender role expectations) prior to and during the pursuit of a college degree as well as the perception of campus climate. It should be noted that the body of research is limited in terms of Latinas enrolled at 2-year institutions, and even more so at 2-year HSI institutions.

* The research proposed here regarding gender role expectations builds upon some of the work (and subsequent recommendation of Marcela Parra, 2007,) a K-State doctoral student, which could benefit K-State students in particular as well as society in general.

* The findings from this proposed study could help GPCC faculty, staff, and administrators better understand the challenges faced by this student population and highlight areas of concern as well as areas of success.

In your opinion, does the research involve **more than minimal risk** to subjects? (“Minimal risk” means that “the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.”)

Yes No

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that an individual has disclosed to you in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Consequently, it is your responsibility to protect information that you gather from human research subjects in a way that is consistent with your agreement with the volunteer and with their expectations. If possible, it is best if research subjects’ identity and linkage to information or data remains unknown.

Explain how you are going to protect confidentiality of research subjects and/or data or records. Include plans for maintaining records after completion.

The identities of participants will be held confidential by implementing procedures including the following:

* students will be assigned pseudonyms

* consent forms will be stored separately from interview data

* taped recordings and computer disks will be stored in locked file cabinets

* files will only be accessible to the principal investigator and the student investigator

* data files will not be submitted via e-mail transmission

* data will be coded and data information gleaned from that will be stored in a separate file cabinet from the consent forms and interview data

VIII. INFORMED CONSENT: Informed consent is a critical component of human subjects research – it is your responsibility to make sure that any potential subject knows exactly what the project that you are planning is about, and what his/her potential role is. (There may be projects where some forms of “deception” of the subject is necessary for the

execution of the study, but it must be carefully justified to and approved by the IRB). A schematic for determining when a waiver or alteration of informed consent may be considered by the IRB is found at

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/consentckls.html>

Even if your proposed activity does qualify for a waiver of informed consent, you must still provide potential participants with basic information that informs them of their rights as subjects, i.e. explanation that the project is research and the purpose of the research, length of study, study procedures, debriefing issues to include anticipated benefits, study and administrative contact information, confidentiality strategy, and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty, etc. Even if your potential subjects are completely anonymous, you are obliged to provide them (and the IRB) with basic information about your project. See informed consent example on the URCO website. It is a federal requirement to maintain informed consent forms for 3 years after the study completion.

- | Yes | No | Answer the following questions about the informed consent procedures. |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A. Are you using a written informed consent form? If "yes," include a copy with this application. If "no" see b. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | B. In accordance with guidance in 45 CFR 46, I am requesting a waiver or alteration of informed consent elements (See Section VII above). If "yes," provide a basis and/or justification for your request. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | C. Are you using the online Consent Form Template provided by the URCO? If "no," does your Informed Consent document has all the minimum required elements of informed consent found in the Consent Form Template? (Please explain) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | D. Are your research subjects anonymous? If they are anonymous, you will not have access to any information that will allow you to determine the identity of the research subjects in your study, or to link research data to a specific individual in any way. Anonymity is a powerful protection for potential research subjects. (An anonymous subject is one whose identity is unknown even to the researcher, or the data or information collected cannot be linked in any way to a specific person). |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | E. Are subjects debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research? Debriefing refers to a mechanism for informing the research subjects of the results or conclusions, after the data is collected and analyzed, and the study is over. (If "no" explain why.) Attach copy of debriefing statement to be utilized. |

***It is a requirement that you maintain all signed copies of informed consent documents for at least 3 years following the completion of your study. These documents must be available for examination and review by federal compliance officials.**

IX. PROJECT INFORMATION: (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes | No | Does the project involve any of the following? |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Deception of subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Shock or other forms of punishment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Sexually explicit materials or questions about sexual orientation, sexual experience or sexual abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Handling of money or other valuable commodities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. Extraction or use of blood, other bodily fluids, or tissues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f. Questions about any kind of illegal or illicit activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g. Purposeful creation of anxiety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h. Any procedure that might be viewed as invasion of privacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. Physical exercise or stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | j. Administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | k. Any procedure that might place subjects at risk |

- l. Any form of potential abuse; i.e., psychological, physical, sexual
 - m. Is there potential for the data from this project to be published in a journal, presented at a conference, etc?
 - n. Use of surveys or questionnaires for data collection
- IF YES, PLEASE ATTACH!!**

X. **SUBJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes | No | Does the research involve subjects from any of the following categories? |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Under 18 years of age (these subjects require parental or guardian consent) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Over 65 years of age |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Physically or mentally disabled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Economically or educationally disadvantaged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. Unable to provide their own legal informed consent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f. Pregnant females as target population |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g. Victims |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h. Subjects in institutions (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. Are research subjects in this activity students recruited from university classes or volunteer pools? If so, do you have a reasonable alternative(s) to participation as a research subject in your project, i.e., another activity such as writing or reading that would serve to protect students from unfair pressure or coercion to participate in this project? If you answered this question "Yes," explain any <u>alternatives options</u> for class credit for potential human subject volunteers in your study. (It is also important to remember that: Students must be free to choose not to participate in research that they have signed up for at any time without penalty. Communication of their decision can be conveyed in any manner, to include simply not showing up for the research.) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | j. Are research subjects audio taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?
* Taped recordings and computer disks will be stored in locked file cabinets, and files will only be accessible to the principal investigator and the student investigator
* Data files will not be submitted via e-mail transmission
* Data will be coded and data information gleaned from that will be stored in a separate file cabinet from the consent forms and interview data |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | k. Are research subjects' images being recorded (video taped, photographed)? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks? |

XI. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** Concerns have been growing that financial interests in research may threaten the safety and rights of human research subjects. Financial interests are not in themselves prohibited and may well be appropriate and legitimate. Not all financial interests cause Conflict of Interest (COI) or harm to human subjects. However, to the extent that financial interests may affect the welfare of human subjects in research, IRB's, institutions, and investigators must consider what actions regarding financial interests may be necessary to protect human subjects. Please answer the following questions:

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Do you or the institution have any proprietary interest in a potential product of this research, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, or licensing agreements? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Do you have an equity interest in the research sponsor (publicly held or a non-publicly held company)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Do you receive significant payments of other sorts, eg., grants, equipment, retainers for consultation and/or honoraria from the sponsor of this research? |

- d. Do you receive payment per participant or incentive payments?
 e. If you answered yes on any of the above questions, please provide adequate explanatory information so the IRB can assess any potential COI indicated above.

XII. PROJECT COLLABORATORS:

A. **KSU Collaborators – list anyone affiliated with KSU who is collecting or analyzing data:** (list all collaborators on the project, including co-principal investigators, undergraduate and graduate students)

Name:	Department:	Campus Phone:	Campus Email:
Bernard Frnklin, PhD	Sp Assis - VP Student Life	785.532.6237	bernardf@k-state.edu
Christy Moran Craft, PhD	Spec Ed Counseling & Student Aff	785.532.5940	ccraft@k-state.edu
Doris Wright Carroll, PhD	Spec Ed Counseling & Student Aff	785.532.5941	dcarroll@k-state.edu
Lori Navarrete, PhD	N/A	702.992.2519	lori.navarrete@nsc.edu

B. **Non-KSU Collaborators:** (List all collaborators on your human subjects research project not affiliated with KSU in the spaces below. KSU has negotiated an Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the federal office responsible for oversight of research involving human subjects. When research involving human subjects includes collaborators who are not employees or agents of KSU the activities of those unaffiliated individuals may be covered under the KSU Assurance only in accordance with a formal, written agreement of commitment to relevant human subject protection policies and IRB oversight. The Unaffiliated Investigators Agreement can be found and downloaded at <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/Unaffiliated%20Investigator%20Agreement.doc>

C. The URCO must have a copy of the Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement on file for each non-KSU collaborator who is not covered by their own IRB and assurance with OHRP. Consequently, it is critical that you identify non-KSU collaborators, and initiate any coordination and/or approval process early, to minimize delays caused by administrative requirements.)

Name:	Organization:	Phone:	Institutional Email:
N/A			

Does your non-KSU collaborator’s organization have an Assurance with OHRP? (for Federalwide Assurance and Multiple Project Assurance (MPA) listings of other institutions, please reference the OHRP website under Assurance Information at: <http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search>).

- No
 Yes If yes, Collaborator’s FWA or MPA # _____

Is your non-KSU collaborator’s IRB reviewing this proposal?

- No
 Yes If yes, IRB approval # _____

C. **Exempt Projects:** 45 CFR 46 identifies six categories of research involving human subjects that may be exempt from IRB review. The categories for exemption are listed here: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html>. If you believe that your project qualifies for exemption, please indicate which exemption category applies (1-6). Please remember that only the IRB can make the final determination whether a project is exempt from IRB review, or not.

Exemption Category: _____

XIII. CLINICAL TRIAL Yes No
(If so, please give product.)

Export Controls Training:

-The Provost has mandated that all KSU faculty/staff with a full-time appointment participate in the Export Control Program.

-If you are not in our database as having completed the Export Control training, this proposal will not be approved until your participation is verified.

-To complete the Export Control training, follow the instructions below:

Click on:

<http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/ecp/index.htm>

1. After signing into K-State Online, you will be taken to the Export Control Homepage
2. Read the directions and click on the video link to begin the program
3. Make sure you enter your name / email when prompted so that participation is verified

If you click on the link and are not taken to K-State Online, this means that you have already completed the Export Control training and have been removed from the roster. If this is the case, no further action is required.

-Can't recall if you have completed this training? Contact the URCO at 785-532-3224 or comply@ksu.edu and we will be happy to look it up for you.

Post Approval Monitoring: The URCO has a Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) program to help assure that activities are performed in accordance with provisions or procedures approved by the IRB. Accordingly, the URCO staff will arrange a PAM visit as appropriate; to assess compliance with approved activities.

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or comply@ksu.edu

INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
(Print this page separately because it requires a signature by the PI.)

P.I. Name: Linda Thurston, PhD, Major Professor

Title of Project: “How Latina’s views of campus climate and gender role expectations contribute to persistence at a two-year Hispanic Serving institution.”

XIV. **ASSURANCES:** As the Principal Investigator on this protocol, I provide assurances for the following:

- A. **Research Involving Human Subjects:** This project will be performed in the manner described in this proposal, and in accordance with the Federalwide Assurance FWA00000865 approved for Kansas State University available at <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm#FWA>, applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. Any proposed deviation or modification from the procedures detailed herein must be submitted to the IRB, and be approved by the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) prior to implementation.
- B. **Training:** I assure that all personnel working with human subjects described in this protocol are technically competent for the role described for them, and have completed the required IRB training modules found on the URCO website at: <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/training/index.htm>. I understand that no proposals will receive final IRB approval until the URCO has documentation of completion of training by all appropriate personnel.
- C. **Extramural Funding:** If funded by an extramural source, I assure that this application accurately reflects all procedures involving human subjects as described in the grant/contract proposal to the funding agency. I also assure that I will notify the IRB/URCO, the KSU PreAward Services, and the funding/contract entity if there are modifications or changes made to the protocol after the initial submission to the funding agency.
- D. **Study Duration:** I understand that it is the responsibility of the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) to perform continuing reviews of human subjects research as necessary. I also understand that as continuing reviews are conducted, it is my responsibility to provide timely and accurate review or update information when requested, to include notification of the IRB/URCO when my study is changed or completed.
- E. **Conflict of Interest:** I assure that I have accurately described (in this application) any potential Conflict of Interest that my collaborators, the University, or I may have in association with this proposed research activity.
- F. **Adverse Event Reporting:** I assure that I will promptly report to the IRB / URCO any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others that involve the protocol as approved. Unanticipated or Adverse Event Form is located on the URCO website at: <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/index.htm>. In the case of a serious event, the Unanticipated or Adverse Events Form may follow a phone call or email contact with the URCO.
- G. **Accuracy:** I assure that the information herein provided to the Committee for Human Subjects Research is to the best of my knowledge complete and accurate.

(Principal Investigator Signature)

(date)

Appendix F - Revisions to Questions

The main/guiding question: *How do perceived gender role expectations and sense of belonging contribute to enrollment sustainability at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution for Latinas?*

Background Information

4. *Please provide some background information about yourself.*
 - *What term(s) do you use to describe yourself in relation to your heritage? (e.g., Latina, Hispanic, Mexican, Salvadorian, etc.)*
 - *What is the preferred term(s) you would like others to use to describe you?*
 - *What is your family's country of origin?*
 - *How many generations of your family have lived in this country?*
 - *How did this (first, second, etc.) generational factor affect your decision enroll in college? Change to: How did being a (first, second...) generation immigrant affect your decision to enroll in college, if at all?*
 - *How has this (first, second, etc.) generational factor affected your decision to persist in college? Change to: How did being a (first, second...) generation immigrant affect your decision to continue with your education in college?*
 - *How many generations of your family have graduated from college?*
 - *How does this influence your decision to stay in college?*

Campus Climate

5. *How does the perception of the environment on campus (i.e., campus climate) contribute to Latina's decision to persist in college?*

Questions pertaining to Academic Environment

- *How would you describe classroom interactions among students in your classes?*

Please identify the class(es) to which you refer.

- *Have you experienced and/or observed any instances that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair during any of your classes? If so, please explain and identify the class(es).*
- *Are there others of similar heritage as you in any of your classes, and if so, how do you feel about that?*
- *How does the curriculum (your studies) contribute to a welcoming campus environment?*

Questions pertaining to Faculty Interactions

- *How would you describe the faculty/student interactions that occur during your classes?*
- *Would you please describe your one-on-one interactions with professors/instructors outside of class?*

- *What makes some professors/instructors more approachable than others?*
- *What courses (or professors/instructors) encourage you to participate in classroom discussions? Change to: What would encourage you to participate more in the classroom? (e.g., subject matter, professors/instructors, being called upon, etc.)*
- *Do you feel respected by your peers/professors? If so, please provide examples. If not, please explain why.*
- *Have you experienced and/or observed any instances involving any of your professors/instructors that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair? If so, please provide examples. Change to: Have you ever been discriminated against or treated unfairly by your professors/instructors? If so, please provide examples.*
- *Have you ever witnessed any of your peers being discriminated against or treated unfairly by professors/instructors? If so, please provide examples.*
- *Is there anything else that you would like to add about the faculty and how they make you feel?*
- *How important are interactions with faculty to your decision to continue your education in college?*

Questions pertaining to interactions with administrators (e.g., President, Vice

President(s), Managers, Department Chairs)

- *Have you felt respected by administrators? If so, please provide examples.*
- *Have you experienced and/or observed any situations involving any administrators that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair? If so, please provide examples. Change to: Have you ever been discriminated against or treated unfairly by any administrators? If so, please provide examples.*
- *Have you ever witnessed any of your peers being discriminated against or treated unfairly by administrators? If so, please provide examples.*
- *Is there anything else that you would like to add about administrators and how they make you feel?*
- *How important are interactions with administrators to your decision to continue your education in college?*

Questions pertaining to support staff

- *Have you felt respected by support staff? If so, please provide examples.*
- *Have you experienced and/or observed any situations involving any support staff that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair? If so, please provide examples. Change to: Have you ever been discriminated against or treated unfairly by support staff? If so, please provide examples.*
- *Have you ever witnessed any of your peers being discriminated against or treated unfairly by support staff? If so, please provide examples.*
- *Is there anything else that you would like to add about support staff and how they make you feel?*
- *How important are interactions with support staff to your decision to continue your education in college?*

Questions pertaining to Outside the Classroom

- *How would you describe the physical environment you live in? (e.g., dorm room, with parents, home/apartment off campus with roommate(s), etc.)*
- *What influenced your decision to live there?*
- *How do you feel about off-campus housing?*
- *How do you feel about on-campus housing?*
- *Please describe any situation that you saw as prejudicial, discriminatory, or unfair related to your ethnicity and/or gender in your living environment.*
- *Is there a particular group of people either on campus or off campus with whom you feel most comfortable? Why or why not?*
- *What organizations are you involved in? How often do they meet? Do you always attend meetings? Do you participate?*
- *Are you involved in any programs or services at this institution that contribute to your continuing your education in college? If so, how do they contribute to your desire to persist?*
- *How often do you go home? Change to: How has the amount of time spent at home changed since attending college? (e.g., increased, decreased, stayed the same) How do you feel when you are home?*
- *How often do you go out with your friends? How do you feel when you are with your friends?*

Questions pertaining to Commitment

- *How do you feel about your decision to attend this college?*
- *Was there ever a time when you wanted to take off one or more semesters or quit college?*
- *Do you have any friends enrolled in this college who thought about leaving? Why did they stay or leave?*
- *What motivated you to enroll at this college?*
- *Were you recruited to attend school here? Have you felt valued at this college? Please provide examples.*
- *How did your family feel about you coming to this college?*
- *How did your significant other (if applicable) feel about you coming to this college?*
- *What motivated you to stay enrolled at this college?*
- *How committed are you to staying here?*

Questions pertaining to Graduating

- *How do you feel about graduating from this college?*
- *Did you have any fears about enrolling in and/or attending this college? If so, what were they?*
- *Have you had any concerns while attending this college? If so, what were they?*
- *How does your family feel about you graduating?*
- *How does your significant other (if applicable) feel about you graduating?*
- *How do you explain to your parents your degree/career?*
- *How do you explain to your significant other (if applicable) your degree/career?*

- *How would you describe the academic advising you have received at this college?*

Sense of Belonging

- *Did any faculty, staff or administrators encourage or discourage you from attending college in high school?*
- *Did you feel welcomed when you first arrived on campus? What things made you feel welcomed or unwelcomed?*
- *How welcomed or unwelcomed do you feel now compared to when you first arrived on campus?*
- *How would you describe your interactions with various student services on campus?*
- *How would you describe your level of comfort at this college?*
- *Do you feel a sense of belonging at this college? Who or what has made you feel that you belong or do not belong at this college?*
- *Please describe any other things (questions/experiences/perceptions) that you haven't had the opportunity to talk about during this interview, but which you find important regarding the topic of campus climate and diversity issues here at this college.*

Gender Role Expectations

6. *How do perceived gender role expectations (duties traditionally performed by women) impact Latina's decision to persist in college?*
 - *How did your gender role expectations impact the decision to enroll in college?*
 - *How do your gender role expectations impact the decision to continue your education in college?*
 - *How do your family's gender role expectations impact the decision to persist in college?*
 - *How does your husband/significant other's (if applicable) gender role expectations impact the decision to continue your education in college?*

Appendix G - Updated Version of Questions for Individual Interviews

The main/guiding question: *How do perceived gender role expectations and sense of belonging contribute to enrollment sustainability at a two-year Hispanic Serving Institution for Latinas?*

Background Information

7. *Please provide some background information about yourself.*
 - *1.1 What term(s) do you use to describe yourself in relation to your heritage? (e.g., Latina, Hispanic, Mexican, Salvadorian, etc.)*
 - *1.2 What is the preferred term(s) you would like others to use to describe you?*
 - *1.3 What is your family's country of origin?*
 - *1.4 How many generations of your family have lived in this country?*
 - *1.5 How did being a (first, second...) generation immigrant affect your decision to enroll in college, if at all?*
 - *1.6 How does being a (first, second...) generation immigrant affect your decision to continue with your college education?*
 - *1.7 How many generations of your family have graduated from college?*
 - *1.8 How does this influence your decision to stay in college?*

Campus Climate

8. *How does the perception of the environment on campus (i.e., campus climate) contribute to Latina's decision to persist in college?*

Questions pertaining to Academic Environment

- *2.1 How would you describe classroom interactions among students in your*

classes?

Please identify the class(es) to which you refer.

- *2.2 Have you experienced and/or observed any instances that you would describe as discriminatory or unfair during any of your classes? If so, please explain and identify the class(es).*
- *2.3 Are there others of similar heritage as you in any of your classes, and if so, how do you feel about that?*
- *2.4 How does the curriculum (your studies) contribute to a welcoming campus environment?*

Questions pertaining to Faculty Interactions

- *2.5 How would you describe the faculty/student interactions that occur during your classes?*
- *2.6 Would you please describe your one-on-one interactions with professors/instructors outside of class?*
- *2.7 What makes some professors/instructors more approachable than others?*
- *2.8 What would encourage you to participate more in the classroom? (e.g., subject matter, professors/instructors, being called upon, etc.)*
- *2.9 Do you feel respected by your peers/professors? If so, please provide examples. If not, please explain why.*
- *2.10 Have you ever been discriminated against or treated unfairly by your professors/instructors? If so, please provide examples.*
- *2.11 Have you ever witnessed any of your peers being discriminated against or*

- treated unfairly by professors/instructors? If so, please provide examples.*
- *2.12 Is there anything else that you would like to add about the faculty and how they make you feel?*
 - *2.13 How important are interactions with faculty to your decision to continue your education in college?*

Questions pertaining to interactions with administrators (e.g., President, Vice

President(s), Managers, Department Chairs)

- *2.14 Have you felt respected by administrators? If so, please provide examples.*
- *2.15 Have you ever been discriminated against or treated unfairly by any administrators? If so, please provide examples.*
- *2.16 Have you ever witnessed any of your peers being discriminated against or treated unfairly by administrators? If so, please provide examples.*
- *2.17 Is there anything else that you would like to add about administrators and how they make you feel?*
- *2.18 How important are interactions with administrators to your decision to continue your education in college?*

Questions pertaining to support staff

- *2.19 Have you felt respected by support staff? If so, please provide examples.*
- *2.20 Have you ever been discriminated against or treated unfairly by support staff? If so, please provide examples.*
- *2.21 Have you ever witnessed any of your peers being discriminated against or*

- treated unfairly by support staff? If so, please provide examples.*
- *2.22 Is there anything else that you would like to add about support staff and how they make you feel?*
 - *2.23 How important are interactions with support staff to your decision to continue your education in college?*

Questions pertaining to Outside the Classroom

- *2.24 How would you describe the physical environment you live in? (e.g., dorm room, with parents, home/apartment off campus with roommate(s), etc.)*
- *2.25 What influenced your decision to live there?*
- *2.26 How do you feel about off-campus housing?*
- *2.27 How do you feel about on-campus housing?*
- *2.28 Please describe any situation that you saw as prejudicial, discriminatory, or unfair related to your ethnicity and/or gender in your living environment.*
- *2.29 Is there a particular group of people either on campus or off campus with whom you feel most comfortable? Why or why not?*
- *2.30 What organizations are you involved in? How often do they meet? Do you always attend meetings? Do you participate?*
- *2.31 Are you involved in any programs or services at this institution that contribute to your continuing your education in college? If so, how do they contribute to your desire to persist?*
- *2.32 How has the amount of time spent at home changed since attending college? (e.g., increased, decreased, stayed the same) How do you feel when you are home?*
- *2.33 How often do you go out with your friends? How do you feel when you are with*

your friends?

Questions pertaining to Commitment

- *2.34 How do you feel about your decision to attend this college?*
- *2.35 Was there ever a time when you wanted to take off one or more semesters or quit college?*
- *2.36 Do you have any friends enrolled in this college who thought about leaving? Why did they stay or leave?*
- *2.37 What motivated you to enroll at this college?*
- *2.38 Were you recruited to attend school here? Have you felt valued at this college? Please provide examples.*
- *2.39 How did your family feel about you coming to this college?*
- *2.40 How did your significant other (if applicable) feel about you coming to this college?*
- *2.41 What motivated you to stay enrolled at this college?*
- *2.42 How committed are you to staying here?*

Questions pertaining to Graduating

- *2.43 How do you feel about graduating from this college?*
- *2.44 Did you have any fears about enrolling in and/or attending this college? If so, what were they?*
- *2.45 Have you had any concerns while attending this college? If so, what were they?*
- *2.46 How does your family feel about you graduating?*

- *2.47 How does your significant other (if applicable) feel about you graduating?*
- *2.48 How do you explain to your parents your degree/career?*
- *2.49 How do you explain to your significant other (if applicable) your degree/career?*
- *2.50 How would you describe the academic advising you have received at this college?*

Sense of Belonging

- *3.1 Did any faculty, staff or administrators encourage or discourage you from attending college in high school?*
- *3.2 Did you feel welcomed when you first arrived on campus? What things made you feel welcomed or unwelcomed?*
- *3.3 How welcomed or unwelcomed do you feel now compared to when you first arrived on campus?*
- *3.4 How would you describe your interactions with various student services on campus?*
- *3.5 How would you describe your level of comfort at this college?*
- *3.6 Do you feel a sense of belonging at this college? Who or what has made you feel that you belong or do not belong at this college?*
- *3.7 Please describe any other things (questions/experiences/perceptions) that you haven't had the opportunity to talk about during this interview, but which you find important regarding the topic of campus climate and diversity issues here at this college.*

Gender Role Expectations

9. *How do perceived gender role expectations (duties traditionally performed by women) impact Latina's decision to persist in college?*
- *4.1 How did your gender role expectations impact the decision to enroll in college?*
 - *4.2 How do your gender role expectations impact the decision to continue your education in college?*
 - *4.3 How do your family's gender role expectations impact the decision to persist in college?*
 - *4.4 How does your husband/significant other's (if applicable) gender role expectations impact the decision to continue your education in college?*

Appendix H - Raw Data Inventory

Table 1 provides an account of data documentation for the 856 pages of raw data that this study generated.

Data Source	Number of Pages per event	Number of pages in total
Group Interview	1 Group Interview – 31 pages	31 pages
Interview transcripts for participant #1	1 st interview – 20 pages; 2 nd interview – 28 pages; 3 rd interview – 14 pages	62 pages
Interview transcripts for participant #2	1 st interview – 29 pages; 2 nd interview – 25 pages	54 pages
Interview transcripts for participant #3	1 st interview – 18 pages; 2 nd interview – 16 pages	34 pages
Interview transcripts for participant #4	1 st interview – 31 pages; 2 nd interview – 13 pages; follow up interview – 2 pages	46 pages
Interview transcripts for participant #5	1 st interview – 19 pages; 2 nd interview 13 pages; follow up interview 3 pages	35 pages
Interview transcripts for participant #6	1 st interview 21 pages; 2 nd interview 14 pages	36 pages
Interview transcripts for participant #7	1 st interview – 20 pages; 2 nd interview 12 pages	32 pages
Member check	20 pages	20 pages
Field notes	27 pages	27 pages
Personal Journal	17 pages	17 pages
Peer Debriefing		
Coding Master 1	59 pages	231 pages
Coding Master 2	79 pages	
Coding Master 3	54 pages	
Coding Master 4	44 pages	
Total Pages of Data		856 pages

Appendix I - Consent Form to Participate in the Study

Dear Great Plains Community College Student:

This research project seeks to identify and understand the personal experiences of Latina students at Great Plains Community College (GPCC) through personal reminiscences gathered during in-depth interviews. The study will provide insight into the challenges faced by Latinas at GPCC, as well as those factors that motivate them to persist in their studies. It is anticipated that similarities to and/or differences of your experiences at GPCC will emerge that reflect educational circumstances nationally for Latinas during the time period under study.

Particular areas of interest for the researcher include personal recollections unique from your perspective regarding academic and social experiences, sense of belonging or connectedness to the college, positive influences that have helped to motivate you, as well as the impact that gender role expectations have on persistence.

Through your participation via discussions during interviews, it is my hope that sharing insights you have gained as a Latina and as a student at GPCC will contribute to the growing body of literature about Latina's educational experiences.

It is estimated that each student will participate in 2—3 interviews lasting approximately 60—90 minutes each in order to collect all needed information. Each session will be recorded, transcribed and coded for use in my dissertation. All data collected will be protected both during and after the course of the study, and will be destroyed after three years as per IRB protocol. The results of these interviews will provide valuable information about the campus climate at GPCC, the role that gender expectations play on persistence, and will enable administrators, faculty and staff to improve the overall environment for students at GPCC.

Both your participation and responses provided will be kept confidential. Please answer the questions posed as honestly as possible. Upon completion of this study, all files will be destroyed after three years, unless you agree to allow your answers provided to be kept for future publishing purposes only. In the event that any presentations or publications result from this research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Should any insights you have provided be used, you will be asked to review the manuscript for accuracy of ideas/views and make any needed corrections.

If you have any questions about the research and wish to speak with an official of the university or the Institutional Review Board feel free to contact either one of the following individuals at the Office of Research and Compliance:

- Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

- Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance and University Veterinarian, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

Your signature at the bottom of this page indicates your consent to participate in this study. You may refuse to answer any questions posed or discontinue the interview process altogether at any time without fear of repercussion. Again, please note that you are under no obligation whatsoever to participate in this study, and all information shared will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your time and consideration in assisting me with my dissertation research. It is women like yourself that will make a real and lasting impact for the better for those who will follow in your footsteps at GPCC. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at any time. I can be e-mailed at selaird@icloud.com or called at (H) 816.531.8597 or (Cell) 816.797.2519.

Sincerely,

Sue Laird
Doctoral Candidate, Kansas State University

Major Professor, Dr. Linda Thurston

Signature of Major Professor

Date

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

Signature of Participant

Date